

Italian gain Bailey loss



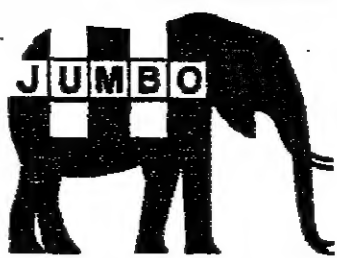
LAST WEEK'S
AVERAGE DAILY SALE
435,000

No 63,273

INSIDE TODAY

A CHRISTMAS MAGAZINE

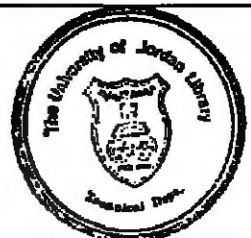
Anthony Burgess looks at the
state of Christianity this Christmas Eve
In the Review section: Jumbo Crossword



ON BOXING DAY

SPECIAL EDITION

The Times will be the only quality
newspaper to publish on Boxing Day
For more details turn to page 20



30p

THE TIMES

SATURDAY DECEMBER 24 1988

Doubts grow over 747 bomb

Channon holiday provokes anger

- Crash investigators have so far found no evidence to indicate that Pan Am Flight 103 was destroyed by a bomb
- Mr Paul Channon, the Transport Secretary, announced a review of security at Britain's airports
- They are studying similarities between it and the destruction of an Air India Boeing 747 off Ireland in 1985
- He was later criticised for going ahead with a holiday in the West Indies so soon after the Lockerbie disaster

By Harvey Elliott, Philip Webster and Michael Evans

More than 48 hours after the Lockerbie air disaster, investigators on the scene and scientists who have inspected the black box can find no trace of a bomb or sabotage.

First tests on the flight recorders of the Pan Am plane revealed nothing abnormal until a split second before radar contact was lost.

Then there is a "faint unquantified noise" on the cockpit voice recorder which experts are still trying to analyse.

Despite the lack of positive evidence, the sabotage theory has not been ruled out, and the row over Britain's response to warnings of a terrorist threat to Pan Am flights continued.

As rescue teams continued to search for more bodies, with the death toll revised to 274, another argument developed because Mr Paul Channon, Secretary of State for Transport, flew to the West Indies for a Christmas holiday yesterday. He was believed to be joining his family on the island of Mustique.

He left behind a growing political controversy over Britain's response to warnings of a terrorist threat to Pan Am flights.

As Mr Channon arrived in Barbados last night, ready to return immediately if required, the Government was under growing pressure to explain why the warning that a bomb would be planted on an aircraft flying from Frankfurt was not passed by the Department of Transport to Heathrow airport, or why the public was not told.

The department explained that Heathrow had not been informed of the threat because aviation security staff concluded that the already increased level of security for American airlines did not necessitate a change in procedures.

At the same time, it was confirmed that Mr Channon knew of the warning - although he did not refer to it when he made his statement to the Commons on Thursday morning.

Before leaving the country yesterday, Mr Channon announced a review of security at Britain's airports in the wake of the disaster.

He insisted that he had no reason to believe there was any security lapse at Heathrow before the doomed aircraft took off. Mr Channon said: "At this stage, I am deter-

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mined to review all security measures at Heathrow, and learn what lessons, if there are any, are to be learnt in this case. As a precaution, I am going to review all the security at all our airports."

Mr Channon faced Labour calls for his dismissal for going away on holiday less than 48 hours after the crash.

Mr John Prescott, the shadow transport spokesman, said that it was "unbelievable, intolerable and insensitive" for Mr Channon to leave for his holidays so soon after Britain's worst aviation disaster, when bodies were still being retrieved and when a big security review was under way.

Mrs Thatcher should call

him back immediately. Such a lack of judgement "would justify his replacement".

But it was confirmed that the Prime Minister had been made aware of Mr Channon's decision to leave and had cleared it.

The Department of Transport explained that Mr Michael Portillo, Minister of State, was the duty minister over Christmas, but that Mr Channon would be kept very closely in touch with what was going on. It said that the matter was weighed carefully, but that Mr Portillo had been involved from the start.

It was explained that the holiday was Mr Channon's annual break, which he usually takes in the winter.

Mr Portillo told Mr Prescott in a letter last night that, because the department received many bomb threats and pieces of intelligence of differing quality, it would be wrong on that basis to issue warnings to British travellers.

He wrote: "We assess any report in the light of other intelligence and, having done so, satisfy ourselves that the security measures applying to the flights under threat are appropriate. When the department received this bulletin, we had it assessed, and concluded that the enhanced security measures already in force in respect of US airline flights out of the UK were appropriate."

Conservative MPs supported Mr Channon, saying that there was little he personally would be able to do over the coming days. The Secretary of State has had a demanding few weeks with the King's Cross underground fire inquiry, followed by the Clapham rail disaster, and then Wednesday's air crash.

There appeared likely to be more long-term embarrassment over the Department of Transport's handling of the

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Sherwood Crescent: Some houses at the top end of the street appear relatively unscathed, but near the A74, little or nothing remains.

Similarities seen with Air India disaster

By Harvey Elliott, Air Correspondent

Crash investigators last night called for detailed reports and the tapes taken from the cockpit voice recorder of the Air India Boeing 747 which crashed into the sea off Ireland in 1985 because of similarities between the two accidents.

The Air India jet, in which 329 people died, also disappeared from radar screens at 31,000 feet. Its pilot did not make a Mayday radio call. A warning had been received before the flight that an Air India jet could be subject to attack. And an official Indian inquiry concluded that it had been destroyed by a bomb, even though no evidence was ever produced to prove the theory.

Soon after the accident the US Federal Aviation Administration

ordered checks on all older jumbo jets, many of which were found to have serious cracks in the spars near the nose cone. Last night Mr Ray Davis, the official British crash investigator who gave evidence to the Indian inquiry said: "The Indian inquiry assumed it was a bomb from the very beginning even though we could not find any trace of such an explosion. We did not have very much wreckage to go on, but there was not a trace of the signs of an explosion on any of the bodies or debris which was recovered."

"We could not say for certain that it was not a bomb but nor could we prove it. I shall not believe that this was a bomb either until firm evidence is produced to prove it."

Houses, families, even the road has gone in the crescent that vanished

By Tony Dawe and Emma Wilkins

The quiet crescent where at least 17 people were struck down as they were taking their tea and preparing for Christmas was opened briefly yesterday to reveal yet another horrific result of the Pan Am crash.

Two homes had completely disappeared under the impact of the falling rear section of the Boeing 747, two more had become empty shells and another eight were so badly damaged they will never be home to anyone again.

It was impossible to identify No 13 Sherwood Crescent, where Mr Maurice Henry, aged 62, lived with his wife Doris, aged 55. Both are thought to have died in the disaster but no remains have been recovered. The Somerville family, Jack

and Rosalind and their children Paul and Lindsay, who lived next door at No 15, are also believed to have perished and the fate of Janet and John Smith, their neighbours at No 17, was unknown last night.

Across the road at No 16 there was one survivor, Stephen Flannigan who had left his home to mend his sister's bike in a neighbour's garage. The sister, Joanne, parents Tom and Kate died.

Further north up the crescent, the houses were roofless and in varying stages of ruin. The exception was the Presbytery, No 1, the home of the Rev John Kerr, which escaped damage. On the western side of the street, No 3, the home of Archibald and Mabel McBride, and No 5, the

home of Robert and Agnes Miller, were slightly damaged. No 7, which bears the name Linnfield and was the home of Dr Neil MacLean and his wife Agnes, has lost its roof as has No 9, the home of the Edwards family who were out at the time of the crash. Mary Lancaster, who lived at No 11, is known to have died.

Janet Neilson lived at Domon, No 8, James and Agnes Robertson lived at No 10, Adam and Agnes Oliver lived at No 12 but what became of them all was still unclear last night. Mr Jean Murray, who lived at No 14 and was reported missing, turned up yesterday after being away from home on the fateful night.



Oh well,
YOU CAN BE SURE OF SHELL



Dreaming of warm Christmas

By Robin Young

As the nation broke up for the Christmas holidays it was estimated that 500,000 people were leaving the country to celebrate abroad. According to the London Weather Centre, they are likely to be miss the warmest Christmas Day since the war.

The weathermen say it is quite possible that temperatures in the South this year will beat the 13.4°C (56°F) recorded at Heathrow in 1949 and throughout the rest of Britain it will be "very mild with a south-westerly airstream".

Nonetheless, the Association of British Travel Agents

said yesterday that 300,000 inclusive holidays had been booked this year, and estimated that another 200,000 would be flying out to visit friends or relatives, or to

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accommodation they had arranged for themselves.

A total of 32 extra flights to North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, India, Jersey and Dublin have been laid on for Christmas week, but the most popular destinations for Christmas in the sun are still the Canary Islands, Majorca and the Costa del Sol

and Costa Blanca in Spain. For skiers the Austrian Tyrol is still the most popular venue, followed by the French and Italian Alps, and finally Switzerland.

British Airways said yesterday that it would be laying on extra TriStars and jumbos for the Belfast shuttle this morning. Last year 10 planes went out for the 8.15 shuttle on Christmas Eve and this morning it is expected to be even more. The airline is also anticipating a 5 per cent increase on last year's long-haul flights.

At Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester airports the ter-

Continued on page 20, col 3

Fugitives linked to blast

Detectives hunting two IRA men who fled a bomb-making factory in a flat in Clapham, south London, after a street shooting on Monday, are understood to have linked them to the Inglis Barracks bombing in which a serviceman died last summer. Material found at the flat may have provided the link.

A man and a woman, held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act yesterday, were last night still being questioned at Paddington Green police station.

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Deficit down Sporting talk

Britain's current account deficit dropped to £1.61 billion last month and the pound moved back above \$1.80. Building societies reported a dismal month's business for November with net receipts tumbling and mortgage commitments at their lowest since January.

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Who said: "I'd kick my own brother if necessary. That's what being a professional is all about." Or: "He bowls too many wicket-taking balls." Or: "Every man prefers my shape to that of a rubber ball." Peter Ball recalls who said what in the world of sport during 1988.

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THE LOCKERBIE JET DISASTER

Bodies may yield clues to cause

By Thomson Prentice
and Peter Davenport

The dead passengers of PA 103 may yield clues to the cause of the disaster and confirm whether or not a bomb was aboard.

Crash investigators at Lockerbie are considering the possibility that a passenger may have taken a bomb on to the aircraft, either deliberately in a fanatical suicide mission, or as the unwitting pawn in a terrorist act.

Yesterday, hundreds of police soldiers and RAF personnel, helped by tracker dogs, gathered some of the thousands of pieces of wreckage scattered across many miles of surrounding countryside as well as in the town itself.

More than 50 British and American aviation investigators methodically examined the cockpit section of the aircraft. Each fragment of twisted metal, electrical wiring and passenger cabin furnishings will be scrutinized.

Every body recovered from the hills, woods and farmland around Lockerbie has been examined where it lay before being moved to the temporary mortuary in the town hall.

The nature of the injuries may cast light on whether explosives were involved while forensic tests can establish any trace of explosives on the skin of victims.

For these reasons the movement of bodies into Lockerbie has been slower than would otherwise have been expected. Police are highly sensitive to the feelings of bereaved relatives but it has been made clear that every victim represents a potentially crucial source of evidence.

Mr Mick Charles, of the Air Accident Investigation Branch of the Department of Transport, is in charge of the Lockerbie operation.

He chose his words carefully at a press briefing yesterday. "We have to try to find whether there were any unusual components of the accident and to find out at which point of the flight things began to go wrong," he said.

"It would be wrong to prejudge the situation. We are looking for evidence to point us in the right direction. But at



The nose section of the jet provides a grim background as policemen carry another body away. The bodies are examined where they lay in the search for clues to the cause of the disaster.

this stage we have no evidence whatsoever of sabotage."

The aircraft's two flight recorders have been retrieved. The data are now being analysed by experts on the Farnborough headquarters of the investigation branch.

"They are being replayed and read out but a lot more work has still to be done on them," Mr Charles said.

Specialists from Farnborough and from the US National Transportation Safety Board were clustered for hours around the remains of the nose section of the aircraft yesterday. They were joined by senior officials of Pan Am and Boeing. American investigators on the site outnumber their British counterparts by about four to one.

In Lockerbie itself the

search for remains of residents killed by blazing debris from the crash was continuing slowly. But since the homes in which they lived have been almost completely obliterated traces of the occupants may prove extremely difficult to locate.

Ten adults and four children from houses in the Sherwood Crescent area are believed to have been killed.

A microscopic examination of the houses and cars destroyed by the jet may be the only way of discovering whether they were occupied at the time of the impact, a leading forensic scientist said.

Police and rescuers on the scene have been mystified by the absence of remains in the burnt-out shells of cars struck by burning debris and fuel from the plane. They have been unable to tell if the

vehicles were occupied, let alone identify the victims.

However, Mr Henry Bland, a consulting forensic scientist with Royston-based UK Forensic Science Services, said yesterday that it would be extremely unlikely that no remains exist either in the cars or houses, or near by.

Lockerbie Academy, the school a few hundred yards from the town centre along Glasgow Road, has become the command centre for the vast operation dealing with the aftermath of the disaster.

The corridors and classrooms have been taken over by hundreds of police, soldiers, mountain rescue personnel, social workers, doctors and airline officials.

Alongside the Christmas decorations on the walls now hang large-scale maps detailing the areas to be searched for

missing bodies and wreckage from the jet and the shattered houses of Lockerbie, lists of instructions for the 600 personnel involved in the search and briefing papers.

Wires for newly installed communications and computer equipment trail alongside streamers and trimmings. Inappropriate as they are, there was simply no time to take them down and now they are a constant reminder of the poignancy of the timing of the disaster.

Each find, no matter how small, is carefully logged for use in the investigation to determine the cause of the disaster.

The main hall has become the central command post for the emergency services and is restricted to authorized personnel only.

On the stage is the control

for the RAF helicopters and search teams which have already found more than 150 bodies in the hills and woods in a 15-mile radius of the town.

Lines of desks are staffed by police officers amassing details to help in the identification of victims and of evidence for the Procurator Fiscal for the area, Mr James McDougal, who is responsible for the inquiry.

Every room is littered with the essential paraphernalia of such operations; in one are piles of blankets, in another communication equipment, yet another holds supplies of overalls, heavy boots and powerful torches.

Social services have taken over the former computer room to set up their operations.

A soldier wheels large filing cabinets into place in a corridor so that the rapidly rising amount of paperwork can be stored. Every disaster creates its own bureaucracy which has to be supplied.

Upstairs are officials of Pan Am, the FBI, US Embassy, the Federal Aviation Authority and the National Transportation Safety Board.

American accents mingle with English and Scottish voices. Telephones ring incessantly and the corridors are constantly busy but overall there is a quiet, unhurried air of efficiency.

One picture in the school canteen shows bottles and baggage tumbling from the tail of a plane in mid-air with the caption: Party in the Air.

The artist could not have imagined the irony.

Constant flow of phoney threats

By Michael Evans
Defence Correspondent

The huge number of threats and warnings of imminent attacks received by governments each day in the West has caused enormous problems for those engaged in counter-terrorism.

Some of the warnings are specific, detailing a time and place. Others are very general. Most come to nothing. But each warning has to be given serious consideration.

Since the beginning of September, the US State Department's counter-terrorism section has dealt with 87 telephone threats leading to 100 alerts being sent out to embassies and missions abroad. In the same period the Federal Aviation Administration has issued airlines with eight alerts.

A counter-terrorism official in Washington said: "It's up to individual US missions to decide whether to post up the warning on the board. A recommendation would be made by the embassy security officer."

He described the warning given by the Middle Eastern informant to the US embassy in Helsinki about a bomb attack on a Pan Am Jumbo flying out of Frankfurt as a "more specific warning". However, he said the extra detail about a Finnish woman

The Lockerbie air disaster has prompted a series of bomb hoax calls against aircraft flying from British airports.

Yesterday an Air India Boeing 747 jumbo jet on a flight from Heathrow to New York with 250 passengers was forced to turn back 40 minutes into its flight after an anonymous bomb warning.

The 747 was taken to a remote part of the airport where it was thoroughly checked and the passengers taken by coach to Terminal Three to await departure.

A British Air Ferries Viscount carrying 33 Shell North Sea oil workers and a crew of four landed safely at Southampton airport in the Shetlands after a flight from Aberdeen.

A telephone call had been received claiming that a bomb was on board one of three British Air Ferries aircraft used by Shell.

On Thursday an Alitalia flight from Heathrow to Rome was grounded for two hours after another bomb hoax call.

taking the bomb on board did not necessarily mean that it was any more credible than a more general warning. "Sometimes people provide more details just to sound more credible," he said.

Frankfurt, which is used constantly by US servicemen, was an obvious choice for someone wanting to issue a phoney warning.

Intelligence agencies are reluctant to open up all the raw material received via telephone threats because of the danger of encouraging others to make copycat calls. It could also increase the level of psychological terrorism in places like Lebanon, where terrorists constantly phone in threats to wear people down.

President-elect George Bush told a news conference that the number of threats received by the United States was enormous and that care had to be taken before they were publicized.

"Sometimes by going public you give undue attention to what the terrorist wants to call attention to," he said. "If you had hard evidence that a specific flight was going to be threatened, or the threat could not be contained, clearly you would want to serve the public good by notifying people."

The Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland also has to deal with hundreds of phoned threats and warnings each year. RUC sources said yesterday that they were always taken seriously.

Sympathy from Reagan

President Reagan yesterday sent a message of condolence to the people of Lockerbie. And President Mikhail Gorbachev sent condolences to the Prime Minister.

Mr Reagan said: "Nancy and I wish to extend, on behalf of the people of the United States, our heartfelt condolence to the people of Lockerbie in this time of loss and sorrow."

"Our hearts go out to you on this tragic occasion, which marred what should have been a season of joy."

The message was sent to Mr Frank Park, of Annandale and Eskdale District Council. In reply, he wrote: "To the President of the United States, on behalf of the people of Lockerbie, I thank you and the First Lady for your kind wishes at this time of sorrow."

"Our small community has suffered much but our sadness is even greater when we think of the loss of so many people from the United States. Our thoughts are with their friends and relatives."

The US Ambassador to London, Mr Charles Price, yesterday sent condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

Tass, the official Soviet news agency, gave no details of Mr Gorbachev's telegram. Meanwhile, in Rome, Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Liberation Organization chairman, yesterday described the crash as inhuman, criminal action directed "against our peace mission (and) against humanity as a whole".

Shattered town years for a sense of normality

By Kerry Gill
and Ronald Faux

The small black figures of a score of policemen were highlighted on the crest of a hillside overlooking Lockerbie last night, a stark reminder to the 3,000 population that the grim search for bodies is likely to continue for several days.

In the streets and shops of the small farming community, locals bravely resumed everyday life, preparing almost reluctantly for Christmas. At the town hall, now a mortuary containing close to 100 bodies, the Christmas tree was taken down as a mark of respect.

Tomorrow the most poignant events will be the services in the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic churches - this year they will be full of sorrow rather than celebration.

Sir Hector Munro, the local MP, yesterday visited houses in the Rosebank Crescent area of the town, where two more bodies were recovered from the plane's fuselage.

Sir Hector said the spirit of the locals was tremendous. "It was like wartime. The people will undoubtedly face a very sad Christmas, but they are taking the strain remarkably well. People were coming out of their homes with cups of coffee, soup and biscuits for the soldiers and police officers."

"They have realized that anything can happen in this world and are taking it extremely bravely. A tremendous community spirit has built up here bringing people even closer together."

In the devastated area of Sherwood Park, the worst hit area of the town, those houses



Police taking part in the painstaking search for bodies and debris near Lockerbie yesterday. The search is expected to continue for several days.

still suitable for occupation had their Christmas trees lighting up the windows. Workmen toiled into the dark replacing missing tiles and windows, troops scoured surrounding streets, removing rubble still scattered around the town. The grim search for bodies continued yards away from the ruins of well-tended gardens.

Lockerbie yesterday was an example of how a community can so quickly return to a semblance of normality.

But as Mr Eddie Gibb, owner of the Crown Hotel, said: "It won't be until all the media and the police and troops leave the town that changes will really be able to come to terms with what has happened here, and we can be

left to bury our dead. I can't tell you a lie, business has been good with so many people in the town, but this is no way people want to earn a living. Everyone is becoming fed up with questions and want to be left alone now."

"We know the media has to do a job but now people want peace."

Sir Hector said: "It is unnatural for people here to have to face the media. They are wonderful, but they find it difficult to come to terms with all this continued questioning and cameras about."

Rabbi Heilpern, from Manchester, pleaded with authorities to allow 13 Orthodox Jews on the flight to be buried yesterday before the beginning of the Sabbath. After being

told this was impossible due to identification problems and the continuing investigation, Rabbi Heilpern conceded, saying he understood the difficulties.

Flight Sergeant David Whalley, leader of the RAF Leuchars mountain rescue team, said he had never encountered such an horrific accident in 20 years of dealing with jet crashes and mountain rescue accidents. "If the cause proves to be sabotage, that one man can inflict this on other human beings is beyond belief," he said, as more than 1,000 soldiers, police and mountain rescue specialists, resumed the meticulous search around the town.

Flight Sergeant Whalley, head of co-ordination for the

mountain rescue teams, was first on the scene with a small reaction group which began to search for survivors in the darkness.

Volunteer mountain rescue teams are trained to recognize parts of an aircraft, however distorted by impact, and to deal with the human results after air crashes.

"What our lads found was so appalling it is bound to have affected them. Bodies and Christmas presents, passports, masses of money."

"The crater was the worst. The trouble is that some of our blocks are only 19 or 20. Just young lads really. They will very likely need some counselling help after this," he said.

Searchers were out helped by nine helicopters as Flight

Sergeant Whalley's map in the rescue co-ordination centre filled with the tragic detail of the disaster, plotting where bodies and debris had been found and the areas that had been searched and places still to be covered.

Woodland was the most difficult he said.

"There are woods around here that are not on the map. We send in dogs that are normally used to detect avalanche victims."

"They have been tremendously valuable."

In Lockerbie itself, troops worked slowly through the streets and lanes, putting every scrap of metal and refuse from the airliner into plastic bags that will be labelled and numbered.

Airport baggage checks

Israeli agency 'warned Pan Am of lax security'

By Charles Bremner, New York, and Stewart Tendler, London.

As tighter security measures swung into action at Heathrow airport yesterday a newspaper report on the other side of the Atlantic said that Pan Am was told two years ago that its security in big European airports, including Frankfurt and London, was "dangerously lax".

According to the report, the finding came from a private Israeli security group. They were engaged by a division of Pan Am to assess the airline's protection of its passengers and facilities, according to Israeli sources quoted in the newspaper report from Tel Aviv.

The Israelis urged sweeping security changes after studying London, Frankfurt, New York's Kennedy and four

other gateways. The security group was told its services, which cost Pan Am 400,000 dollars, were no longer needed after the survey was completed because of clashes with Pan Am's chief security officer, who felt their findings were too harsh, the newspaper said.

The sources said only cosmetic tinkering, falling below "what would be considered high professional standards in the field", ever took place.

But the newspaper, the New York Post, quoted an official with a Pan Am security subsidiary in New York as saying the Israeli firm had been commissioned as only one of several outside consultants and that some of its recommendations had been

incorporated in the airline's security routines.

Mr Terry Hickman, president of Alert Management of Valley Stream, Long Island, a Pan Am subsidiary which specializes in airport security, told the newspaper that changes were made after the Israeli report which "satisfied both the security needs of Pan Am and the Federal Aviation Administration".

In London yesterday, the Department of Transport said they would expect the police investigation into the background to the crash to look at a report that PA 103 took off leaving a passenger behind but taking his luggage.

As a security measure boarding passes are supposed to be checked against luggage.

If the luggage does not tally with the passes the extra luggage is left behind or searched.

A spokesman for the department said the luggage may have been searched, cleared and put aboard the aircraft.

By the time the passenger, an American businessman, turned up the aircraft was leaving the boarding gate.

At Heathrow yesterday travellers faced increased frequency of hand-baggage checks, with particular emphasis on the huge number of transatlantic flights.

But the extra caution did not prevent one false alarm temporarily closing terminal three for several hours.

Police explosives experts were called to the airport at

one point after a passenger dumped his luggage in the terminal in the departure area used by Pan Am and Air Canada.

The suitcase was left next to an Air Canada check-in counter, close to a Pan Am desk.

The terminal was evacuated but when police opened the abandoned suitcase they found only clothes. Police believe the passenger had planned to present a false passport, took fright and fled.

Despite the crash there was no sign of an abatement in the number of people flying from the airport.

Crowds packed all four terminals at the airport with long queues forming for domestic shuttle flights.

Within a few hours of the Pan Am crash, Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch and Mr George Churchill-Coleman, its commander, were alerted to form part of an international team investigating a possible bombing.

Mr Churchill-Coleman, commander of the branch for more than three years, is no stranger to Middle Eastern terrorism. As a senior detective in 1980 he headed the investigation in the aftermath of the Iranian Embassy siege and two years ago mounted the prosecution against Nezar Hindawi, who tried to put a bomb on an El Al aircraft using his unwitting pregnant girlfriend.

In recent months he has been leading the police effort to get Father Patrick Ryan back to Britain for trial.

A tall, grey-haired figure, Mr Churchill-Coleman, aged 50, has been a London policeman for 28 years. His career has included command of detectives in the West End, where he led the successful investigation into the death of seven Chinese in a Soho gambling club, and deputy command of the complaints

investigation bureau. A man who chooses his words carefully, albeit sometimes forcefully, Mr Churchill-Coleman leads a team noted for perseverance and the successful application of forensic science.

As the police in London geared themselves up for the investigation, scientists from the Royal Armaments Research and Development Establishment based in Kent were already working in Scotland with crash investigators. They will hunt through the debris.

Somewhere in the bomb debris they may also find the first clues and even evidence which might be used in a case

Passenger

Friend
I kissed
Bryony
said tak

Promise of state help by Rifkind

By Herri

Townsend...
fired by...
er will...
Government...
Richard...
Scotland...
The Govern...
ing the de...
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Galloway...
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Disciplining not linked to Clapham, says BR

Signalman in TV talk dismissed

By Roland Rudd
Employment Affairs Reporter

A British Rail signalman was dismissed yesterday after he alleged on television that the railway board is suffering from numerous signal failures such as the one that caused the Clapham Junction disaster in south London.

Mr Michael Lisicki lost his job after a 75-minute disciplinary hearing at Waterloo station.

He faced three charges: doing a double shift to help a friend; aiding and abetting a friend to be absent from work without authority and for being 17 minutes late for work on November 21.

Mr Lisicki said the charges were "trumped up" to dismiss him after he made allegations on BBC's *Kilroy* programme that signal failures occur

regularly because of faulty equipment. "British Rail is victimizing me for what I said on television. Other guys who have been caught doing a double shift in the past have just been given a warning", he said.

Mr Jimmy Stevenson, who represented Mr Lisicki for the National Union of Railwaymen, told the hearing that double shift practices had been going on for years and that on occasion British Rail asked employees to do a double shift when staff are

unwell. Mr Lisicki, aged 25, of Chatham Grove, West Norwood, south-east London, yesterday repeated his allegations that "Clapham could happen again unless British Rail stop cutting staff and overworking technicians".

He added: "The bosses have to improve pay and employ more experienced staff. The older signals, if

they are maintained properly are adequate, but the new signals, installed on a low budget, could cause another disaster."

British Rail confirmed he had been dismissed "after an incident in November" but was not given official notice of the charges until December 15.

"Mr Lisicki was not sacked or disciplined as a result of appearing on television", said Mr Lisicki, who has seven days to appeal.

A preliminary meeting of the public investigation into the Clapham Junction disaster is to be held on January 9 in Central Hall, Westminster. It has been called by Mr Anthony Hadden, QC, who was appointed to conduct the inquiry.

Meanwhile British Rail is to order new rolling stock to replace units written off, less than two weeks ago, in

the disaster, in which 34 people died. This was revealed in a written answer in the House of Commons by Mr Michael Portillo, Minister of State for Transport.

Six units were effectively destroyed in the collision, and they will be replaced by six additional four-car units of the type used on the Thameslink line, which operates services from Bedford across the Thames to Gatwick and the south coast.

The Prime Minister yesterday held out little prospect of eliminating overcrowding on London commuter trains to the extent that all passengers could expect to have a seat.

In a letter to Mr Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader, Mrs Thatcher said that it was not yet known whether the trains involved in the disaster were overcrowded.

Plea to protect Lake District

By Peter Davenport

New moves to create a legal framework to protect the Lake District from increasing threats to its character and environment are to begin next year. If they are unsuccessful many of the area's qualities may be lost forever.

National Park authorities are to consult national organizations, parish and district councils and individuals about proposals to promote a private Bill which would give wide-ranging and unprecedented new powers.

Among the more radical suggestions are a tax on tourists spending nights in the Lake District, and powers to control second-home purchases, noise levels, low-flying aircraft, boats using the lakes, and to help local people forced out of the housing market by increasing prices.

Mr John Toothill, the National Park Officer who put forward the proposals, admits they are controversial but he is adamant that if nothing is done to limit environmental damage caused by the number of visitors, the character of the area will be destroyed.

"These are far-reaching proposals but they need to be made. Otherwise the lakes themselves will be overrun, dangerous and wastelands for nature conservation."

Mr Toothill has been with the authority for 18 years and he admits that the difficulties have never been worse.

Behind the proposals are problems created by the parks' own success story. It caters for up to 14 million visitors a year and there is no sign of the numbers falling.

The tourism boom, fuelled by easier access by road and rail and greater prosperity, has brought undoubted benefits to the local economy. Up to 45 per cent of all jobs in the Lake District relate to tourism and much of the £275 million spent each year by visitors to Cumbria as a whole is within the Lake District.

Critics say the character of the area has already been destroyed in areas such as Bowness, Windermere and Ambleside.

Among the proposals are: A visitor tax for any tourist who spends a night in the Lake District. A 50p levy would bring in between £2 million and £4 million to the national park authority, whose budget from central and local government is £2 million.

The authority says it cannot deploy enough funds to secure the future of agriculture in the area, where many hill farmers work on the financial margin,



Mr John Toothill: "Wastelands for nature conservation".

but it wants powers to prevent the sale of farmhouses separately from farm land.

The authority wants to be given powers to ease the housing problem of local people who find themselves priced out of the market by the demand for holiday homes.

The new Bill would give powers to control development of fish farming in the lakes, forestry, and the siting of television satellite dishes and play equipment in hotel grounds.

The Bill would enable the authority to introduce a registration system for boats, covering all the lakes, and enable better control of noise limits and times of use. It would enforce anti-pollution and navigation regulations.

The Bill may also attempt to impose a ban, except in emergencies, on military flights below 5,000ft.

It would seek to control motor rallies and ban competitive climbing events on the Lake District crags.

Mr Toothill, who hopes that a Bill can be submitted by November next year, said: "The balances are becoming distorted and if we do not move they will tip even further."

Coventry bank robbery

Hurd praises shot policeman

By Craig Seton

A policeman who escaped death by turning just as a bank robber opened fire with a pump action shotgun has received a letter from Mr Douglas Hurd, Home Secretary, praising him for upholding the "finest traditions of the police service".

Det Constable Leonard Jakeman, aged 38, speaking yesterday for the first time from his hospital bed, said he knew another officer had been shot dead when he tackled two bank robbers in Coventry on Monday. He said that by turning to the side as the shotgun was fired, he managed to avoid taking the blast full-on. Instead, the pellets entered his stomach at an angle and emerged from his right side.

Mr Hurd said: "I was

shocked to hear of the injuries you received as a result of bravely carrying out your duties as a police officer."

"In taking the action you did, putting your concern for your fellow-citizens before any thought of your personal safety, you upheld the finest traditions of the police service."

Constable Jakeman was speaking shortly after dozens of Coventry policemen, including senior officers, attended the private funeral of Police Constable Gavin Carlton, aged 29, who was shot dead during Monday's shootings, after a raid on the Midland Bank at Tile Hill in the city by two men.

Some officers broke down as heartbroken relatives

sobbed, their cries the only sounds to break the silence which ended a short funeral service.

David Fisher, aged 22, from Newport, Gwent, killed himself during a siege which followed Monday's shootings.

Nicholas Hill, aged 20, also of Newport, was yesterday remanded in custody at Coventry Magistrates' Court until January 20 accused of murdering PC Carlton, attempting to murder Constable Jakeman and robbery. He faces further charges of attempting to murder a Securicor guard in Swindon, Wiltshire, in September, 1987, and a robbery at the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society in Gloucester, last January.

Todd gets writ in TGWU vote fight

By Roland Rudd, Employment Affairs Reporter

The former chairman of Britain's biggest union, the Transport and General Workers Union, is taking legal action against the union's general secretary, Mr Ron Todd.

Mr Brian Nicholson, who lost his seat on the 39-man executive in last February's elections, claims his opponent, Mr Steve Riley, was not eligible to stand because his contributions were in arrears.

Mr Nicholson has issued a writ through his solicitors, Lawford and Company, alleging that Mr Todd has "failed to uphold the union's rules".

At a general executive committee meeting last September, Mr Todd infuriated the 17

centre-right members, who later left the meeting, when he ruled in favour of Mr Riley's candidature.

The right was further enraged when Mr Todd also turned down attempts to suspend Mr Ivan Monkton, a left-winger from Wales.

Mr Todd has ordered an investigation into the disputed election and into the affairs of four regions controlled by the right.

The inquiry will attempt to determine whether right-wingers in the union have been working with other right-wing activists in the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union.

Drug case man faces extradition

One of the men charged in connection with a global drug smuggling was recommended for extradition to the United States at Bow Street Magistrates Court, central London, yesterday.

He was accused of assisting in the conspiracy - which obtained cannabis and marijuana for the West Coast on the United States - by supplying false passports or travel arrangements.

James Newton, aged 56, a solicitor, of Kinnerton Place, Knightsbridge, was accused of conspiring to import dangerous drugs into Florida. He will remain in custody to await the decision of the Home Office.

Brain cell transplants 'encouraging'

By Craig Seton

The hospital which pioneered brain cell transplants in Britain using tissue from an aborted foetus has now completed the operation on 12 patients with Parkinson's Disease, it was disclosed yesterday.

Professor Edward Hitchcock, of the Midland Centre for Neurosurgery and Neurology, Sinschewick, West Midlands, said that the operations showed some encouraging signs of alleviating the effects of the disease on the mobility

of Parkinson's Disease sufferers.

But he said: "It is important to stress that the procedure is still very much at an experimental stage. We shall need to evaluate the progress of each patient very carefully for some time yet before we can say to what extent the transplants of brain cell tissue will be able to play a part in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease for some patients suffering from this debilitating condition." Professor Hitch-

cock's first brain cell implant in March caused a debate over the use of foetal tissue. He emphasized then that there was no question of foetuses being aborted to facilitate the operations and said the foetal material came from a tissue bank. The hospital's ethics committee gave the go-ahead.

He also appealed to his critics to consider whether it was ethical to withhold from Parkinson's Disease sufferers a technique which could offer them some prospect of relief.

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Bleak forecast for Leeds University as it faces £3m debt

By Sam Kiley, Higher Education Reporter

Leeds University has joined a growing number of colleges facing penury according to its financial report which reveals that it faces debts of more than £3 million next year.

According to Sir Edward Parkes, vice chancellor of Leeds, the university had a net deficit of £1.643 million last year and would be budgeting for a deficit of more than £3.4 million in 1988-89.

Leeds joins Aberdeen University which earlier this month announced that it was accumulating debt at £2 million a year and faced insolvency unless it received a substantial injection of funds, and University College, London, whose debt of £13.6 million has come under the scrutiny of the Department of Education and Science.

The last time a university was subjected to such an inquiry of this type was when University College, Cardiff, was rescued by the Government with more than £11 million after it was revealed that the college had spent at an insupportable rate.

Sir Edward said in his annual report to the Leeds University Court that "the recurrent grant (from the Government) for universities is planned to increase by about 10 per cent in cash terms over three years...yet Treasury estimates inflation over the same period is expected to be in the order of 12 per cent".

He said in the light of that the university would have to plan for a reduction of 7 per cent in real terms which, unless it was offset by extra

income would "imply an economies programme nearly as drastic as that we had to initiate in 1986" when 300 staff were dismissed.

After a decade of stagnation in the academic job market as many as 1,000 places for young academics are to be made available over the next five years under the Government's revamped "new blood" scheme.

A total of £70 million has been set aside to ensure that the project goes smoothly after widespread criticism that the Government's previous plan was too inflexible because it was centrally managed, allowing little room for local adaptation. The money comes from the £155 million restructuring fund allocated in November for three years plus £20 million from this year's public expenditure review.

Unlike the previous scheme the money will be allocated according to student numbers in subjects and will give managers the opportunity to recruit according to academic plans agreed with the University Grants Committee, which distributes government funds to universities, and has recently been replaced by the Universities Funding Council.

Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, chairman of the new council, has warned that the career structure in academia, which at present means that there is "bunching" at highly-paid senior levels and prevents resources being made available for new entrants, would pose problems for both initial entry and retirement.

Chairs and lectureships to

fall vacant over the next five years will be identified and the savings from salaries calculated so that new staff can be recruited at lower incomes with extra funds being drawn from the £70 million fund.

According to the Times Higher Education Supplement, Sir Mark Richmond, chairman of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, welcomed the fact that money was to be made available as a lump sum.

"This time we will be able to bring on people a year or two ahead of time. We can recruit someone in a new area, knowing that someone else will be going in an old area", Sir Mark, vice chancellor of Manchester University, which is to get an extra £2.57 million over the next five years, said. A large focus comes under examination in a university degree course on rioting and civil unrest. Leicester University's master of arts degree in public order will focus on football hooliganism, unrest and rioting in Britain and the rest of the world, and is the first degree of its kind in Britain and will be on offer to students of the one-year course by October. It is hoped policemen, social workers, probation officers and Civil Servants might be among potential recruits.

Mr John Benyon, sociology lecturer in charge of the course, said: "We live in a society that is considerably more violent than, say, 10 years ago. Violence in Britain is on the increase and we ought to be trying to understand why."

College run on Christian line

By Douglas Broom, Education Reporter

The first City Technology College to be run on Christian lines will open in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear in September 1990, it was announced yesterday.

The 900-pupil college will be on the site of the St John Fisher School, Lobley Hill, a Roman Catholic comprehensive which closed earlier this year.

A group of Christian businessmen on Tyneside, led by Mr Peter Vardy, chairman of Reg Vardy Motor Group and Mr Albert Dicken, chairman of Dickens Ltd, a home-

improvement chain, have raised £1.5 million towards the capital costs.

Among other companies taking part are John Laing, the construction group, and Argyll Group, owners of the Presto and Safeway supermarket chains. The Government will provide the balance of the necessary £6 million.

As well as providing technology-based education to pupils aged between 11 and 18, the college will place a strong emphasis on Christian values, morals and ethics.

Collective worship will play

a central role in the school day. The sponsors said yesterday: "Respect for traditional family life will play a significant part in the school curriculum".

Children of all faiths will be eligible to attend.

Mr Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education and Science, said: "The school will serve as a beacon of excellence for the area."

Mr Vardy said last night: "We are protecting our own futures by ensuring that children emerge from school with a good education."

Post haste for Christmas

ADRIAN BROOKS



Sir Bryan Nicholson, chairman of the Post Office, gives Trudy Heenan, aged seven, a ride in an electric wheelchair — a gift for her grandfather from Santa Claus. Trudy's was one of half a million requests sent through the Post Office to "Reindeerland" this year. But it touched the hearts of Royal Mail workers and they did the rest. "We thought it was just the sort of thing that is a symbol and epitomizes what Christmas is all about", Sir Bryan said. The chair will be handed over to Mr Rule in the new year once it has been modified for his special requirements. This year the Royal Mail has faced the biggest Christmas challenge in 350 years, Sir Bryan said, and it had met it successfully. About 1.5 billion letters and cards have been posted, beating last year's record of 1.4 billion.

Pupils will get 'a free' GCSE

By Our Education Reporter

Thirty thousand fifth-form pupils will qualify for GCSE science next summer without having to sit an examination or carry out any formally assessed course work.

The School Examinations and Assessment Council has approved a new method of examining known as graded assessment, pioneered by the largest of the GCSE examination boards.

The 30,000 pupils who will be awarded certificates by the London East Anglian Group

began studying for their GCSEs at the age of 11.

Graded assessment works on the principle of a ladder, with 15 "levels of achievement" through which pupils progress from the ages of 11 to 16. The top five levels equate to GCSE grades.

Instead of examinations and formal course work teachers are left to devise their own methods of assessing the performance of their pupils under the supervision of

examiners who make monthly calls.

The founders of the system, which has been developed over 10 years, say it allows pupils to progress at their own pace with the brightest able to gain the equivalent of an O level at the age of 14.

The first pupils to qualify will be drawn from more than 40,000 who have been taking part in a pilot programme in 25 local authority areas throughout England.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Demand drops for home loans

New mortgage commitments by the building societies fell last month to its lowest level since January, the Building Societies Association said yesterday. Its figures show that high interest rates are working through the housing market to cool the economy.

Home loan rates rose in August and October, and are expected to go up again in the new year after a further increase in base rates late last month in the wake of the record balance of payments deficit.

Net new mortgage commitments last month were worth £3,445 million, down from £3,588 million in October. In January, a traditionally quiet month, the figure was £2,877 million. Mr Mark Boleat, the association's director general, said commitments last month had continued the downward trend established in the summer when interest rates began rising and double tax relief for joint borrowers ended.

YTS places 'adequate'

Sufficient places in the Youth Training Scheme are available in all parts of the country for young people who want them, Mrs Thatcher told Mr Kinnoch yesterday. In reply to a letter from the Labour leader about homeless teenagers, she said there were 129,000 unfilled places at the end of last month and it was not correct to say that 20,000 could not find a place when they had exhausted their bridging allowance. "I understand that many of them had made no effort at all to find a place during the eight weeks they had been paid to do so," she said.

Union merger plan

Nearly 150,000 Civil Servants are to get details of a proposed merger between their union and the giant GMB. Mr John Ellis, general secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association, said he was determined that his members should have the chance to amalgamate with the GMB instead of only with the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. If delegates at the association's annual conference turn down the proposals for a merger with the NUCPS, as twice before, the way will be open to amalgamate with the GMB to create a union with a million members.

Ryan letter action

The Foreign Office has begun disciplinary proceedings against an official suspended after writing a letter to *The Guardian* accusing Mrs Margaret Thatcher of "self-righteous invective" over the Father Patrick Ryan affair. Mr Patrick Haseldine, a second secretary, has received a copy of a formal complaint alleging he contravened the Diplomatic Service Regulations. It marks the start of a procedure which could end in dismissal. He has been at home on full pay since publication of the letter, which accused the Prime Minister of having double standards on extradition.

Falklanders reassured

Mrs Margaret Thatcher told the Falkland Islanders last night that the Government would never accept the arguments of those who refused to recognize their right to decide their own future. She said in her Christmas broadcast to the islands that Britain was determined to uphold that right. Sovereignty was not for negotiation. "This year's debate at the United Nations saw a further reduction in support for Argentina, a clear sign the international community is losing interest in this pointless vote."

Dorchester spruce-up

The Dorchester in London closed its doors yesterday for a £72 million refurbishment which management said will enable it to retain its position as one of the world's luxury hotels. The Sultan of Brunei bought the hotel in 1985 for an undisclosed sum after it had changed hands several times in the preceding decade.

Father invents alarm to avert cot deaths

A father who lost a baby son through cot death has invented an alarm system to save other young lives.

Mr Clive Morris, aged 37, has set up a company to produce a monitoring device to detect sudden changes in temperature.

His own family tragedy, when his son Steven died 19 years ago, prompted him to study research into the syndrome thought to kill up to 2,000 babies a year in Britain.

Mr Morris, of Port Talbot,

West Glamorgan, said: "Unlike some other monitors on the market, which rely on movement or breathing, this alarm is activated by temperature which the medical profession believes more and more is the key factor in cot death."

His Teletab 90, or Temperature Alarm for Babies, will sell for about £90. A sensor pad picks up any significant rise or fall in temperature, triggering off bleeps.

Waite family hails public's support after Beirut kidnap

The family of Mr Terry Waite, who is spending his second Christmas as a hostage in Beirut, said yesterday that the support they had received from the public made them realize "we do not face the situation alone".

Mr Waite, special envoy for the Archbishop of Canterbury, vanished in Beirut on January 20, 1987, while on a mission to seek the release of hostages.

Since then there has been no word

from him or his captors. His brother, Mr David Waite, said in a statement on behalf of the family yesterday: "During this year a day has not gone by without the Waite family remembering Terry in the circumstances that he finds himself and, as Christmastime approaches, our thoughts and prayers are particularly with him and all those he went to the Lebanon to help."

"We are grateful for the continued

efforts of the Archbishop of Canterbury and his staff to bring about an end to this situation and for their help and support during this year."

"We have also been heartened by the Government's moves to seek ways of improving relations between Britain and Iran."

"Many letters of support and encouragement have been received from members of the public making us realize that we do not face the

situation alone. At this time of peace and goodwill, we would encourage people of every creed and culture to use their energy and influence to bring about the return of all hostages."

Mr Waite's mother, Mrs Lena Waite, has sent a card of thanks to Mr Malcolm Hipwell the retired postman from Modbury, Devon, who has encouraged 100,000 people in the West Country alone to send

Christmas cards to her son in Beirut. It is the second Christmas that Mr Hipwell has urged anyone with a spare card to send it to Mr Waite, using the address "c/o The Kidnappers, Beirut, Lebanon".

The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking on BBC Radio 4's *World at One* yesterday, said: "Sometimes people have asked me what I want for Christmas and I have to answer, 'I would like Terry Waite back'."

Councils aid Armenia

Local authorities are sending engineers and construction and public health workers to help with rebuilding after the Armenian earthquake.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, organizing the drive, has already had £20,000 from Hammersmith and Fulham in west London.

Sir Jack Layden, chairman

of the association, said: "Employees from the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority have already been involved in the rescue operation, but the need from now on will be for health and construction workers, public health inspectors and engineers to help the Russians rebuild."

Evacuation, page 6

THE
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Air Miles is the exciting new collection scheme that was launched in the UK on November 1st. It allows you to fly free to over 150 destinations worldwide with British Airways and other leading airlines.

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If you want to join the Air Miles scheme but have not yet registered, we have some good news for you. We have extended our initial 5% bonus voucher offer to the 31st January 1989.

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Libya's chemical weapons factory

US embarrassed by Reagan revelation on military strike

From Michael Binyon, Washington

The United States appears somewhat embarrassed by the revelation given to President Reagan's speculation on a pre-emptive strike against a Libyan chemical weapons facility, and spokesmen have emphasized that US officials are still consulting allies.

President-elect George Bush, showered with questions about Mr Reagan's remark in a pre-recorded ABC television interview that he was discussing the possibility of destroying the factory, said the US would seek the help of European allies to "turn around the Libyan regime". Only if that failed would he consider other options.

He said the US planned to discuss the Libyan project "in considerable detail" at an international conference on chemical weapons in Paris from January 7 to 11. The 100-nation conference was proposed by President Reagan in a speech to the United Nations in September. The US will be represented by Mr George Shultz, the Secretary of State.

Mr Bush said the US should not give up trying to change the policy of the Libyan regime. But it was "inappropriate" to go into details of other possible actions.

Mr Bush has a strong personal commitment to the abolition of chemical weapons, for which he is seeking an early treaty with Moscow.

President Reagan raised the issue of the factory with

President Gorbachev at their recent meeting in New York, but the Soviet leader said he had no information about it.

While citing the Administration's "extreme concern" about the factory, 35 miles south-west of Tripoli, Mr Martin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman, said: "I would not say it's our intention to attack it."

An Administration official had earlier said that while the US was not ruling out a military option, "the thrust is the international conference". Mr William Webster, the director of the CIA, said the

Libya denies the Rabta plant, 35 miles south-west of Tripoli, is used for chemical weapons, and says it makes only pharmaceuticals there (Our Foreign Staff writes). The official news agency says doctors and nurses are to take part in a sit-in at the plant.

chemical-metallurgical complex was the largest known chemical weapons facility in the Third World.

Intelligence and Congress sources have said the US has precise aerial photographs of the factory. It is heavily defended by Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles, and destroying it will not be easy.

● LONDON: The Government has been consulting America about the chemical weapons factory, but President Reagan's revelation that

military action to destroy it was being considered has also caused surprise and embarrassment in Whitehall (Andrew McEwen writes).

Such an attack might involve the use of the American bombers based in Britain which carried out the bombing raid on Tripoli in 1986.

The Foreign Office refused to confirm or deny that military action had been discussed by the Allies. "We are considering what to do about it (the factory)," a spokesman said, adding that no form of action had been ruled out, but that this should not be taken as confirmation that a military option was on the cards.

Whitehall sources suggested there was some doubt that the factory was actually producing chemical weapons. Tripoli has said it produces medicines, and it could be doing both, since certain substances can be used as chemical bases for either weapons or medicines. But the fact that the factory is apparently heavily protected strengthens suspicions about its purpose.

Observers believe Britain would be reluctant to sanction the use of the US bases for a strike and would greatly prefer a diplomatic approach.

The Foreign Office yesterday emphasized the importance it attaches to next month's Paris conference, which it hopes will strengthen the determination of other countries to halt the spread of chemical weapons.

Joy over bribe case acquittals



Miss Beth Myerson, left, and her friend Sandy Stern, jubilant in the back of a taxi yesterday after a New York jury had acquitted Miss Myerson on all charges that she bribed an elderly woman judge to intervene in the divorce of her younger lover.

The verdicts, after the jury deliberated for three days, cracked the legal complicity of Miss Myerson, aged 64, who was a television personality in the 1960s and held the post of Cultural Affairs Commissioner under Mayor Edward Koch (Charles Bremner writes).

"Justice has been done," she sobbed as she was comforted by Mr Andy Capasso, the sewerage contractor 20 years her junior whose divorce was at the centre of the trial. Miss Myerson's co-defendants, Judge Hortense Gabel and Mr Capasso, were also

acquitted on all charges. But, as newspapers pointed out yesterday, the 1945 Miss America faces a long fight to restore her reputation.

For weeks, New York's television, its tabloid press and its magazines have savoured the lurid details of Miss Myerson's character and complicated personal life, including the fact that a police investigation revealed that she wrote obscene letters to rivals for the affections of previous lovers.

Former friends described her as vindictive and mean-spirited. She was also convicted of shoplifting in Pennsylvania while awaiting the corruption trial.

The collapse of the federal corruption case in the "Beas Mess" has denied the prestige of Mr Rudolph Giuliani, the crusading New York prosecutor who has built his

reputation as a white-collar "crime-buster", bringing to book insider dealers, corrupt politicians and Mafia bosses.

Newspapers speculated yesterday whether Mr Giuliani would now go ahead with a widely expected run to become the Republican candidate for Mayor of New York in next year's election. Apart from being a political fiasco, the trial cost millions.

Miss Myerson had been accused of giving a low-paying job to the emotionally disturbed daughter of Judge Hortense Gabel, aged 75, in return for a reduction in Mr Capasso's alimony payments to his former wife.

Mr Capasso is serving a three-year jail sentence for tax fraud. Mayor Koch, who had been called to give evidence against his former close colleague, said yesterday he was "glad for Miss Myerson as a

personal friend". Mr Koch, whose administration has been tainted by a string of corruption scandals, partly owed his election in 1978 to the presence of the popular Miss Myerson at his side throughout the campaign. He had previously been dogged by rumours of homosexuality.

Jurors said yesterday they had rejected the evidence of the star prosecution witness, Miss Sukhreet Gabel, aged 38, because they found her unbalanced.

Miss Gabel's vivid testimony, some of it obtained by taping family conversations with a hidden recorder, propelled her to instant celebrity on New York television talk shows. She is thinking of writing a book.

One juror said the prosecution had presented only "melodrama and a hint of sleaze".

French curb on police drinking

From Philip Jacobson, Paris

In the wake of the recent conviction of a Paris police inspector who shot and killed an unarmed youth after having consumed a large quantity of alcohol while on duty, the Ministry of the Interior is to clamp down on the apparently long-established tradition of boozy sessions inside local commissariats.

France's boys in blue will still be able to enjoy wine, beer and cider with their meals - but the hard stuff, it seems, is out. Hopefully that means there will be no repeat of the events that led to Inspector Patrick Savrey being given a seven-year jail sentence last month for voluntary homicide.

By the time he drew his Smith & Wesson 38 special and shot an 18-year-old youth of Algerian origin at close range, Savrey had put away enough red wine and Ricard to raise his blood/alcohol count to 1.85 grammes, far above the legal driving limit in France.

But Savrey had left the Madeline commissariat behind the wheel of an official car with a colleague in the passenger seat.

Not long afterwards, Savrey was taking a whisky at the Tout Va Bien bar in a Paris suburb when a brawl started. Witnesses say he turned, shouted "police" and immediately fired a single shot into the chest of Abdel Benyahia. At Savrey's trial, prosecution experts claimed that he would have needed to consume at least 20 large glasses of Ricard in the space of an hour to reach his alcohol/blood level. The court also heard that he had subsequently been classified officially as an alcoholic.

Many 'homeless by choice'

From Our Own Correspondent, Washington

President Reagan, on the eve of his departure for his lush home in Bel Air, Los Angeles, said that many homeless people slept on grates or on the grass from their own choice, instead of going to shelters.

He also claimed in a television interview that a large percentage of the country's homeless - estimated to number up to three million - were "retarded" people who had voluntarily left institutions in which they had been placed.

"There are shelters in virtually every city and shelter here, and those people still prefer out there, on the grates or the lawn, to going into one of those shelters," he said in a one-hour videotaped interview with ABC Television.

The President blamed the increase in homelessness on the American Civil Liberties Union for successfully promoting changes in the law that allowed the "mentally impaired" to be kept in institu-

tions only if they represented a threat, a danger to others or to themselves. As a result, many had left these institutions.

"They wanted freedom, but they walked out to where there was nothing for them," he said. Asked about the people sleeping in a park 200 yards from the Oval Office where the interview was taped, Mr Reagan said there would always be people who "make it their own choice for staying out there."

Mr Mitch Snyder, a nationally known advocate for the homeless, said that during a recent bitter cold spell in Washington, people had to be turned away from shelters already filled beyond capacity. President-elect George Bush spoke last week of the need to end the "national shame" of homelessness.

The figures are bitterly disputed, with some groups giving a total of three million, while a study last month by the Urban Institute concluded

that there were around 600,000. Mr Reagan agreed that not everyone had been helped by the improvement in the economy. But he claimed there were plenty of vacancies, saying that on any Sunday *The Washington Post* carried from 60 to 75 pages of job advertisements.

In the interview Mr Reagan was asked whether the opposition in the Soviet Union was strong enough to oust President Gorbachev. He said that, until now, the Government had been dominated by the Communist Party, representing only a tiny elite. So it was possible, as in the past, for leaders suddenly to be ousted. Though he did not see any indication or threat of that yet, it had to be considered when looking at Soviet history.

Mr Reagan also called President Ortega of Nicaragua a "shameless dictator" adding that he "doesn't stand in the same box with Gorbachev as far as I am concerned".

Armenia quake evacuation nears its end

From Mary Dejersey, Moscow

More than 20,000 people, about half of them children, have still to be evacuated from north-eastern Armenia after the earthquake which struck the area on December 7.

Mr Stepan Shalabyev, leader of the official Soviet trade union organization, who is supervising the evacuation, hoped it would be completed by the weekend.

The Politburo commission overseeing the relief operation reported on Thursday evening that more than 92,000 people had already been evacuated - 20,000 more than the initial estimate. Fifty thousand have been given temporary accommodation in rest homes and youth camps in Georgia, the Crimea and the south of Armenia.

The commission said most of the evacuees were children with their teachers, and elderly people. But the operation has met problems. One

report spoke of survivors lying down in the path of bulldozers to prevent the rubble being cleared until it had been thoroughly searched for missing relatives.

Rumours that earthquake orphans would be moved to Russia and adopted by Russian families, or that a large part of the Armenian population would never be allowed to return, were dismissed by the authorities as scaremongering, and were said to have originated from Armenian nationalist groups.

When the evacuation is completed, one of the most serious difficulties will be the reunification of families separated by the disaster. Immediately after the earthquake, the only way survivors had of finding relatives was to post messages on tree stumps and fences near their former homes. Now, the Communist youth newspaper in Yerevan is distributing a special daily supplement containing details of survivors who want to trace relatives.

But there were many small babies who would be unable to say who they were, and reuniting surviving parents and children would take a long time, one newspaper said.

A special centre has been set up, based at the Yerevan Conservatoire, to co-ordinate all information about survivors. Parents of lost children can go and register detailed descriptions - including colour of hair and identifying marks like scars and birthmarks. It has the names of about 25,000 children.

Many daily papers are publicizing individual cases of children who have lost their parents - "Help me find my mummy," the central youth news-

paper headed one such article yesterday, and told the story of a small boy who lost his parents in the earthquake, but whose uncle had been traced after some elaborate detective work by one of the centre's staff.

The Yerevan centre has also been registering the names of people who wanted to adopt Armenian orphans. But they had already had more than 8,000 requests, and had had to close the lists. They would only give children for adoption, a spokesman said, if their parents had been established dead.

● GENEVA: Senior International Red Cross officials reported yesterday that relief workers have the situation in Armenia widely under control after two weeks of what they say were poorly co-ordinated efforts (AP reports). Mr George Reid, acting chief delegate of the League of Red Cross Societies' Armenian delegation, said from Yerevan that rehabilitation efforts were now under way in "a race against winter".

WORLD ROUNDUP

Sri Lanka to end emergency state

Colombo - More than 2,000 people held under Sri Lanka's six-year state of emergency will be freed on January 15, the Government announced yesterday. The Minister for National Security, Mr Lalith Athulthumudalai, who also said that the six-hour nationwide curfew would be lifted for three days over Christmas, adding that the Government did not plan to extend the emergency when it lapses in mid-January (Vijitha Yapa writes).

But despite the minister's claim that last Monday's presidential election had halted the spiral of political killings mostly attributed to the Sinhalese People's Liberation Front, six more murders were reported yesterday.

Three supporters of the ruling United National Party were killed at Narammala, and three workers of Indian origin were killed at Haputale, in the central hills. Security sources blamed the Liberation Front.

UN winner killed

Rio de Janeiro - The president of a Brazilian rubber tappers' union, renowned for his efforts to protect the Amazon forest, was shot dead at point-blank range by a man with a shotgun as he stepped from the door of his home in Xapuri, a village of rubber tappers in the north-west Amazonian state of Acre (Mac Margolis writes).

Senhor Francisco Mendes Filho, aged 44, who won a UN ecology prize on World Environment Day last year for his work protesting at the destruction of the Amazon area, had often said he was at the top of a ranchers' murder list.

Moscow woos king

Rome - A senior Soviet envoy flew here yesterday in an attempt to secure the exiled King of Afghanistan's blessing for a transitional government after Moscow withdraws its troops in February (Roger Boyes writes). Mr Yuli Vorontsov, the Soviet Ambassador to Kabul and a Deputy Foreign Minister, will meet King Zahir Shah, right, today in Moscow's first direct contact with the monarch, who has been in exile since 1973.



Blast in aircraft hold

Madrid - An explosion in the hold of an airliner shortly after more than 110 passengers and crew disembarked here yesterday was attributed by police to a "souvenir" artillery shell in a Spanish soldier's duffel bag on board Aviaco Airlines Flight 185 from Palma de Mallorca (Harry Debutius writes). A baggage handler was hurt. A second shell was discovered in the bag of another soldier soon after the explosion.

Attack on free space trips

From Our Own Correspondent, Moscow

An article in an official Soviet newspaper has attacked the practice of giving free trips into space to citizens of friendly nations and called for the programme to be put on a commercial basis.

It said that the Soviet Union had precious few things that were competitive on the world market, and its present displays of generosity were a mark of unprofessionalism and poor husbandry.

The article, in the Communist youth newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, had particularly harsh words for the joint Soviet-Albanian mission, which it described as a shambling from the first "press conference" in space, during which there had been virtually no translation into Russian, to the dramatic landing - at the third attempt. The author, Sergei Leskov, said that there

was an argument for deciding that the less useful a foreign comonomer would be in space, the more his country should have to pay for the privilege.

If, as had been proposed for a joint Soviet-Austrian space flight next year, the guest was going to conduct important scientific experiments, then the price could be lower. But if he was just coming along for the ride, the price should reflect the real cost.

It was quite acceptable for the Americans to take a Saudi astronaut into space, because his country could pay. But if a nation could not pay, then perhaps it would do better to stay in the age of the steam engine where it belonged.

Mr Leskov, while insisting that the Soviet Union should not take the US as its model in everything, had high praise for the commercial basis on

which Nasa, the American space agency, had to operate and the fact it must compete for government funding on the basis of published economic projections.

The space sector, like all Soviet organizations, is supposed to be switching to a system of self-financing in the new year but, Mr Leskov said, there was little sign of change.

He criticized the fact that there were no published figures for the cost of Soviet space ventures and objected that space scientists tended to regard resources as limitless. They needed to show greater responsibility.

Mr Leskov's insistence that people should know how much money was being spent on a sector which has brought little material benefit reflects a growing national concern with "value for money".

Soviet atomic power halt

From Our Own Correspondent, Moscow

The Soviet authorities have halted construction of four new nuclear power stations and suspended the extension of three others because of concern about safety. At the same time, the first international inspection of a Soviet nuclear power station - in the country's newest - has revealed shortcomings in the standard of building and equipment.

The Minister of Atomic Power, Mr Nikolai Lukonin, said yesterday that work had been stopped on projected power stations near the Byelorussian capital, Minsk, and near Krasnodar, in the south of the Russian Federation, and Odessa, on the Black Sea, because the design did not meet regulations introduced after the Chernobyl disaster.

Building of a new atomic power station planned for

Azerbaijan will not be completed for the time being awaiting seismicological reports on the area.

The second stage of work on atomic power stations in neighbouring Georgia and Armenia has been halted for the same reason, and at Ignalina, in Lithuania, a combination of public pressure and seismicological considerations has brought the suspension of work on the planned third and fourth reactors.

The First Secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia had said in October that the Armenian power station would be closed within two years because of public concern about safety.

The Soviet Prime Minister, Mr Nikolai Ryzhkov, repeated the pledge after the Armenian earthquake on

December 7. Yesterday, Mr Lukonin said the plant had been checked after the earthquake and had withstood the tremors without damage.

Mr Lukonin was addressing a press conference about the first inspection of a Soviet nuclear power station - at Rovno in the Ukraine - by a team from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The leader of the team, Mr Maurice Rosen, noted that there were defects in building work and in the equipment supplied to the power station, which staff at the station then had to remedy. He gave no details of the precise faults, saying that this was a matter to be sorted out with the supplier one of the Soviet machine-building ministries.

Moscow agreed to IAEA inspection after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident.

High-fiving Bush fires laser shots at language

From Charles Bremner, New York

"Hey, let's get on with this President thing." Mr George Bush may not have uttered those words, but any American who has absorbed more than a couple of "sonar blips" in the past few months would guess that was him. The sentence is pure Bushspeak.

The new President is bringing with him into office a slangy idiom that reveals much about the Bush mind. In the interests of transatlantic understanding, here is a brief primer in the new President's English and the way it reflects the current citizens' idiom.

For a start, there is the Bush syntax - or rather lack of it. Governor Michael Dukakis may owe part of his downfall to his rare ability to come up with subject, verb and object before the fall stop. His verbal skill did not help his attempt to be the man of the people.

Bushspeak prefers the rambling, haphazard, stream-of-consciousness style popularized by President Reagan and now widely shared by other politicians, pop stars, teenagers and

sports commentators. Unless something changes, the White House transcript office will need a blizzard of dots and dashes to help untangle the new presidential utterances.

Then there is the Bush affection for the macho slang he hears on his favourite Country and Western radio stations. He likes to "go ballistic" and fire "laser shots" when he is angry. "It was Tension City," he says when the dust settles. And he loves to sprinkle his talk with the "heys" that have come into vogue over the past year or two.

Here are Mr Bush's thoughts on press criticism: "Four years ago I'd go ballistic when I read some of this stuff. But hey, let him do his thing and I'll do mine."

"Thing" is another Bush favourite. He has talked recently of "the vice-presidential thing" and the "Persian Gulf thing" and, of course, his "vision thing" became a catchphrase of the campaign.

The President-elect is also a free borrower of fashionable youth slang, though it often sounds odd from his lips. Top of this glossary is the "high-five sign", the skyward slapping of palms that originated in the

1970s in the black inner city. Exalting in his selection as candidate, Mr Bush several times used these words when recalling the last sitting Vice-President to win the presidency.

"I just couldn't help think that old Martin Van Buren was up there giving me the high-five sign." Mr Bush has also been known to urge people to "hey, lighten up", another of the 1988 vogue phrases.

● Four years ago I'd go ballistic when I read some of this stuff ●

Mr Bush, though, is no more guilty than other politicians of over-using the current clichés from the business-political-media world.

"You don't have to be a rocket scientist/brain surgeon" to know that these "go with the territory", to use just two of the current favourites. For example, Mr Dukakis's reaction on the day of defeat last month was to shrug and say: "It goes with the territory."

US politicians are also picking up the businessman's "do-able", a

shorthand way of saying "I think I can make money out of it", and "concept", as in "let's talk concept", a phrase that means "I haven't done my homework".

Other popular slang from television-land is making it into public life. For example, the venerated Dr Henry Kissinger asked in *The Washington Post* this week: "Is Gorbachev for real?" Across the country, Americans are telling one another this winter to "get real" and the highest compliment you can pay is to call someone a "very real person". The opposite is, of course, not "mereal" but insincere or phoney.

A very real person can, of course, be a very "happening" kind of guy but never a "groovy" one, at least for the young. In current youthspeak, "groovy" means the opposite of what it did for all the "granolas" who used it the first time round.

Dr Kissinger, too old even to be a "granola", would be unlikely to call Mr Gorbachev a "happening kind-a-dude" since this is strictly under 25-language.

A "granola", taken from the nearest America has to muesli, is

someone from the 1960s. Those people, though, are usually held by the new youth crowd to be "PC". This has nothing to do with computers. "Politically Correct" implies an ideology aligned to the newly emerging neo-left.

But newcomers should not be confused by another shifted meaning. It would be no mistake, for example, to show your approval of Mr Bush by calling him "totally radical" or just plain "rad". The word just means excellent.

Dr Kissinger and Mr Bush would also not be "dissed" to hear that they were not "PC". To "diss" someone these days means to insult them.

At the end of a year which has seen the most intense political marketing in history, it is no surprise that the popular language is absorbing and incorporating phrases borrowed from the mirror world of the television commercial. The other day, one football coach described his feelings after his team's victory: "It doesn't get any better than this." That phrase comes straight from a well-known beer commercial, but there was no sign that a quote was intended.

Vatican relies on eternal vigilance in search for the next saint

From Roger Boyes
Rome

They are invisible of course, like all good ghosts, but they crowd out the austere ante-rooms of the Jesuit headquarters, waiting their turn to join the Communion of Saints.

They are a strange company: soldiers, an American millionaire, women who fought off rape, missionaries, concentration camp inmates. All led brave Christian lives, some died the most spectacular and grisly of Christian deaths.

The Vatican's saint specialists — at the Congregation of Saints and the College of Postulators — are working full pelt.

To walk the corridors of the Vatican at this time of year is to be struck by the contrast between the two Roms. Italy has been winding down to Christmas since November, only the ritualized consumer frenzy prevents it from falling into a narcotic daze. The Vatican, meanwhile, is teeming like an ant-hill; clerks bustle with papers as in a company that has to prepare its tax returns by midnight.

The Vatican saint factory has been breaking production records for 10 years, matching the Pope's desire, and the Church's need, for models of holiness. There have been more than 314

people beatified in this papacy. This Pope has beatified and canonized more than any other Pontiff in history.

Father Paolo Molinari, the president of the College of Postulators, is a theological gung-ho. Is there any man in the Vatican who delves more deeply into private lives and beliefs?

Local churches first present the case for canonization of a devout parishioner, a man or a woman who appears to shine with sanctity. The candidate's dossier arrives at the postulators' office, which acts not only as a research and detective agency but also as a form of lawyer, preparing a case for judgement by the Congregation of Saints. "I have to look for all the evidence possible and to prepare a special volume that will be submitted to a number of consultants. Usually it goes first to the historians. From them it goes to the theologians, then to the cardinals and bishops." But this understates the complexity of selecting and promoting saints.

Is a parish suppressing negative evidence? Was the holy man merely good? Were there suspicious or political circumstances surrounding his death? Such questions can only be answered by thorough document checks and by questioning witnesses, in the manner of an orthodox biographer.

Father Molinari said: "I don't like to stress the

comparison with a traditional investigation of a police station. You mention somebody, or an event, and of course you try to go deeper in the matter, but put it in a positive way. Whatever can contribute to know the person.

"If he had a good friend, I try to meet him. I try to trace him. Maybe they went to university together. And from there you go to the core of a life of a person — his inspiring principles of

● We wait if there's a need for clarification. That's wisdom rather than diplomacy ●

action, what his beliefs were, what his motivations were, you try to draw out this portrait."

Since Pius XII, the Vatican takes into account historical context, the psychology of the candidate and the social structure of the neighbourhood.

The problems come with the pace of canonization. In the past, there could be a more leisurely discussion of candidates, their stakes would be improved or worsened according to the personal tastes of the reigning pontiff. But the Pope is acting out of a double conviction. The first is that, as the product of the Second Vatican Council, he

must take seriously its commitment to use saints as models for Christians. Second, the Pope, the most travelled in history, is searching for models that have direct relevance to the country he is visiting. Put crudely, the Pope likes to take a saint in the aircraft when he travels out of Rome.

When the Pope spots a candidate, representing Christian virtue in a neglected ethnic group, he can speed it up. He is travelling to Madagascar in September next year, so the Vatican saint-makers are working on the cause of a married woman — but more, a married woman that will send signals beyond the shores of Madagascar.

How, given this Pope's commitment to new canonizations, is one to spot a saint? Father Molinari speaks of a certain fire, a spirit that springs out, is immediately apparent, and indeed lasts beyond the grave. The saint-makers observe carefully to ensure that the adulation of a saint is not being manipulated, nor becoming the subject of a fashionable cult.

Candidates for sainthood are presenting themselves all the time; but to accelerate the cause, say of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, the murdered Solidarity priest, or Cardinal Oscar Romero of El Salvador, murdered in 1980, would be playing with political fire. They are clear cases of martyrdom, but their message is not always

completely to the liking of the Pope or the church hierarchy. Cardinal Romero, a stalwart defender of the oppressed and a fierce critic of the Government, is regarded by many Latin American believers as the first martyr of liberation theology. Father Popieluszko was in conflict not only with Warsaw but with his primate.

The drive to canonize can serve the interests of papal diplomacy, but by the same token causes can also be held back. The Vatican saint specialists see it differently. Father Molinari explains: "Some people will say to hurry up with a candidate, others will call for clarification. And if there is indeed need for clarification, we wait. That's wisdom rather than diplomacy. Romero could be transformed or used for political reasons, there may be politics involved."

"But equally, there may be a more theological issue, say a priest involved with guerrillas. Here we are dealing with the question: Are the guerrillas morally lawful from a Christian point of view?"

As we left, past the statue of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order — a soldier-saint — the waiting room was empty, to the naked eye at least. Not for long in this papacy: the saint-makers have a busy new year ahead, the candidates will be forming an orderly queue.

Arens takes office and labels PLO as leading terror group

From Richard Owen, Jerusalem

Mr Moshe Arens, the new Israeli Foreign Minister, yesterday declared that the PLO remained "the major terrorist organization in the world", and said that to talk to terrorists — an apparent reference to the US dialogue with the Palestinians — only encouraged further violence.

Foreign Ministry officials yesterday condemned the meeting at the Vatican between the Pope and Mr Yasser Arafat, the PLO chairman, declaring: "Peace in the Holy Land can hardly be served by such a meeting." But on a more conciliatory note, they said that the new Israeli coalition, consisting of Likud, Labour, and the religious parties, was actively looking for a peace initiative in response to the US-PLO dialogue.

Sources said that the most favoured Israeli option would probably be peace talks among the "interested parties" in the Middle East under super-power auspices.

An opinion poll published yesterday in the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* showed that 54 per cent of Israelis favoured dialogue with the PLO following Mr Arafat's undertaking not to engage in terrorism. Diplomats said that the finding was striking in view of the new coalition's guidelines, which flatly rule out any contacts with the PLO.

On the other hand, 44 per cent of those questioned in the poll conducted earlier this week, backed the government position, which is based on the hard line pursued by Likud, to which both Mr Yitzhak Shamir, the Prime Minister, and Mr Arens belong.

"The problem lies in defining terrorism," one official said as Mr Arens took over the Foreign Ministry from Mr Shimon Peres, the Labour leader. "If an Arab boy throws

a firebomb at a bus somewhere in the (occupied) territories, most Israelis would say that was Palestinian terrorism, even if the PLO had nothing directly to do with it."

Mr Arens, in his first comments on taking over from Mr Peres, said that tragedies such as the explosion on the Pan Am jumbo jet over Scotland on Wednesday "return us to reality, in which Israel and other free countries are engaged in a campaign against terror."

Officials said the change of tone at the Foreign Ministry was striking, noting that Mr West Beirut — Syria, moving rapidly to challenge Mr Yasser Arafat's forces in southern Lebanon, is encouraging the formation of a new guerrilla coalition to step up attacks against Israel and discredit the PLO's peace programme (see *Juan Carlos Gumbao* writes).

Mr Ahmed Jibril, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, signalled Syria's intentions by announcing the creation of a "wide united front to resist the surrenderist policy which Arafat is working on" at a rally here.

Arens had a reputation as a hawk. Israel's peace policy is to be decided in future by an inner Cabinet of six ministers, three from Likud — Mr Shamir, Mr Arens, and Mr David Levy, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing — and three from Labour — Mr Peres, Mr Yitzhak Rabin, the Defence Minister, and Mr Yitzhak Navon, the Minister of Education and also a Deputy Prime Minister.

Many analysts see this as a recipe for deadlock, with the two parties — as the *Jerusalem Post* put it this week —

Arafat seeks support in a wary Rome

From Our Own Correspondent
Rome

Mr Yasser Arafat, the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman, yesterday skillfully deployed meetings with the Italian Government and the Pope to seek support for the newly-declared Palestinian state.

But neither Italian nor Vatican officials were eager to commit themselves, and were careful to voice their support of Israel.

Mr Arafat's audience with the Pope is sure to anger Israeli and Jewish lobbyists, who complain that the Vatican has still not opened diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. But both the Vatican and the Italian Government, while welcoming the recent concessions by the PLO, are wary of being manipulated.

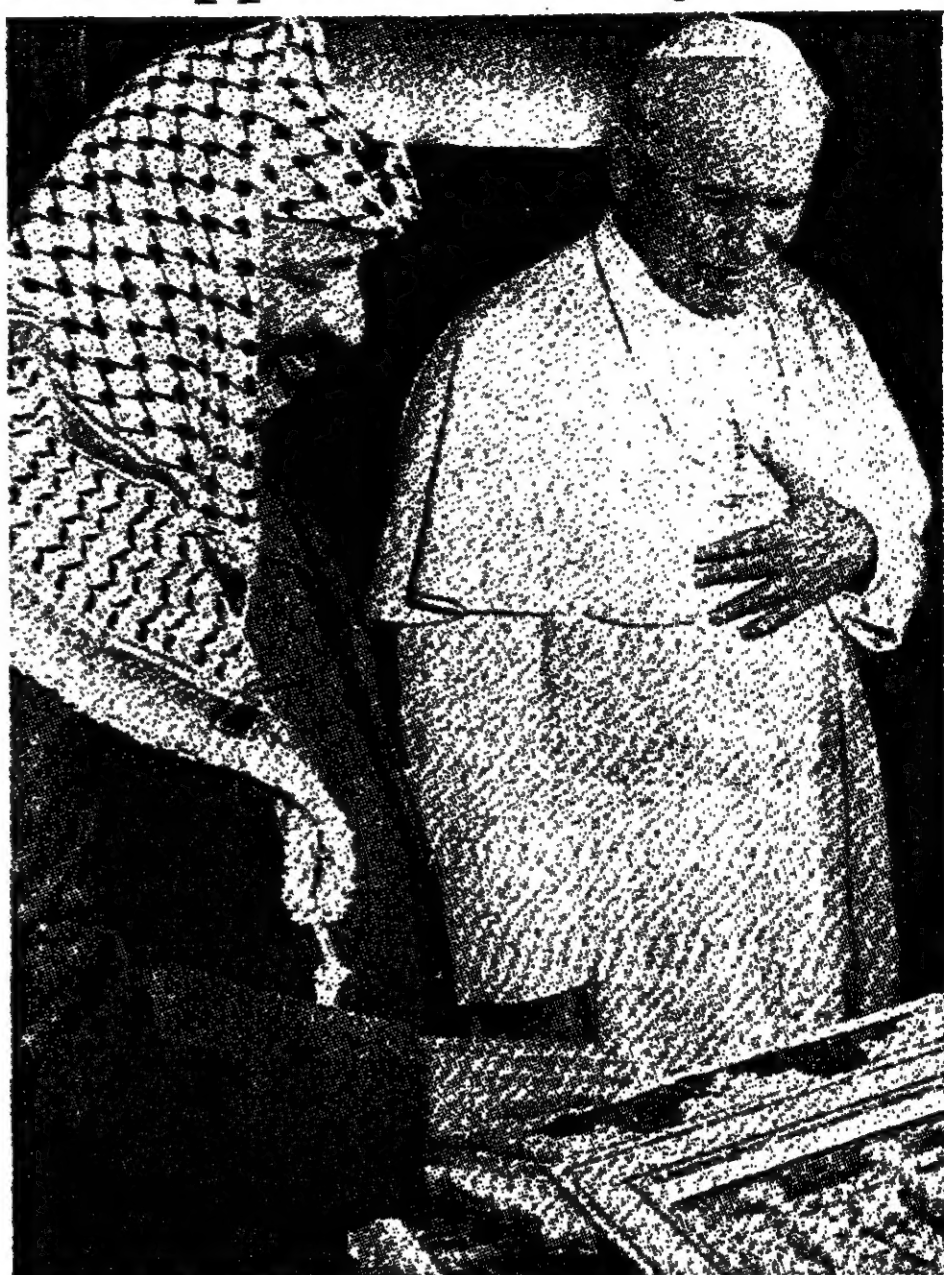
The Vatican would clearly find it difficult to recognize a Palestinian state as long as it has no diplomatic relationship with Israel.

Signor Giulio Andreotti, the Italian Foreign Minister, made it clear that his priority was to open direct dialogue between Israel and the PLO. He said that "a conference held without Israel, or worse still against Israel, would not make sense". He wanted to keep dialogue open between Europe and Israel, even at the cost of delaying recognition of the Palestinian state.

Mr Arafat, who met the Italian Prime Minister, Signor Ciriaco De Mita, for the first time yesterday, wants faster progress. He views Italy as his best friend in the European Community and is trying to secure a platform of European recognition to put pressure on the new US Administration.

This was indicated by an Arafat adviser, Mr Abdou Rabbo, who told Italian journalists: "Arafat's visit to Rome is important because Italy has the power to play a propulsive role in Europe, both towards arranging a peace conference and recognizing the Palestinian state."

The climate of discussion, however, has been soured by the explosion on board the Pan Am jet which crashed in



The Pope admiring a Nativity wood carving given to him yesterday by Mr Yasser Arafat. Scotland on Wednesday. Were it to emerge that Arafat had similar extremist groups had been involved, then Mr Arafat would have to dissociate himself more strenuously, and repeatedly, from acts of terrorism before there could be any real progress on recognition of the state by Europe.

But he emphasized that terrorism was not justified. Mr Arafat visited Rome only recently, on the day after the Israeli elections, and disclosed his plans for announcing a Palestinian state to Signor Andreotti.

But although Italy views the developments positively — and is encouraged by the beginnings of a conversation between the US and the Palestinians — it is con-

strained by the need to arrange a European consensus. Signor De Mita said yesterday that Italy should assume a more assertive foreign policy; Middle East developments may give Rome this opportunity.

Meanwhile, Mr Arafat — having said that the Israeli secret service, Mossad, was plotting to kill him — was accompanied by 12 carloads of bodyguards here yesterday.

Chadli loses support in poll

Algiers (AFP) — President Chadli, the sole candidate in Thursday's Algerian elections, was re-elected for a third term in office yesterday with the lowest support ever registered by an Algerian presidential candidate.

The Interior Ministry said the President won 81.17 per cent approval, against 94.23 per cent when he was first elected in 1979 and 95.36 per cent when he was re-elected in 1984. Turnout on Thursday was 89 per cent, much lower than for the previous ballots.

The poll was brought forward two months after political changes following riots over high prices, food shortages and unemployment early in October, which left up to 500 dead, according to unofficial figures. The President gave up some of his wide powers to the National Liberation Front-led Government after the unrest and the Interior Ministry said the "yes" vote endorsed further liberalization.

Reserves on disputed isles

Peking (AFP) — Rich oil and mineral deposits have been found around the Spratly Islands, a strategic archipelago in the South China Sea that is claimed by China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Scientists from Nanhai Oceanography Research Institute found 105 billion barrels of oil reserves, 25 billion cubic metres of gas reserves and 370,000 tonnes of phosphorus among the 400 islands and reefs, the New China News Agency said.

Dali setback

Madrid — The surrealist painter, Salvador Dali, aged 84, was back in hospital in Figueras, on Spain's Costa Brava, suffering from a bleeding stomach ulcer. Doctors described his condition as serious. He was admitted to hospital more than a week ago and has had treatment for heart and lung disorders.

Briton out

Nairobi (Reuters) — Kenya deported a British journalist, Mary Anne Fitzgerald, who returned on holiday after being forced to leave when convicted of trying to export foreign currency. She wrote for *The Independent* and *The Sunday Times*.

Jail carnage

Mexico City (Reuters) — Two people, including a prison warden, were killed, four wounded, and an unknown number held hostage in an abortive jail break at Tepic in northern Mexico.

Buried alive

Dhaka — Three young girls making mud dolls at a building site were buried alive as construction workers accidentally dumped tonnes of rubble over them in Dhaka's northern Mirpur suburbs.

Auditor dies

Athens (AFP) — Mr Spyros Papadatos, the auditor who exposed irregularities amounting to nearly £120 million at the Bank of Crete, died from a heart attack.

Envoy killed

Gudalajara (Reuters) — Mr Ruchai Stroi, Yugoslavia's Ambassador to Spain, was killed when his car hit a bridge in this town east of Madrid.

Christmas in the grip of the intifada — and the shadow of the Emperor

Too much room at Bethlehem's inns

From Our Own Correspondent
Bethlehem

When you visit Mr Elias Freij, the Mayor of Bethlehem, it is wise to display a keffiyeh (Arab head dress) in your car in the hope that Arab boys will not throw stones through the windscreen.

According to Mr Freij, Arab support in largely Christian Bethlehem for the year-old intifada, or Palestinian uprising, is waning.

Others — notably Israelis — say the previously well behaved citizens of Bethlehem and nearby Beit Sahur, traditional site of the fields where the shepherds were told by angels of Christ's birth, have been coerced into support for the revolt by the intifada leadership, which has forced shops to close.

The religious ceremonies go ahead as normal, but the Roman Catholic Patriarch will arrive today to celebrate

Midnight Mass in a sullen and cowed town guarded by hundreds of police and soldiers, with body searches and metal detectors on Manger Square.

The little town of Bethlehem, in other words, is being crippled by the troubled politics of Christmas and by the simple fact that it lies in the occupied West Bank.

Far from lying "in a deep and dreamless sleep as the silent stars go by", it seethes with anger and frustration behind the shuttered shop fronts, while the shopkeepers and hotel owners count the cost of more than 100 days of strikes.

The scene on Manger Square itself, where the Church of the Nativity stands, is surreal. The Bethlehem Souvenir Enterprise is deserted. So are Bethlehem's 84 restaurants and cafes, normally booming at this time of year as pilgrims and tourists pour in. According

to Mr Freij, the town's economy, dependent on tourism, arts, crafts, and souvenirs, has lost "millions of dollars". Hundreds of Bethlehem families are descending into poverty and this month he was unable to pay the town's municipal employees.

Of the town's five main hotels, two are empty, and the other two have 30 per cent occupancy. "It is not so much a question of no room at the inn," one church official said. "More a question of there being no guests."

The intifada and the Israeli crackdown have been a disaster for a town which has little means of survival beyond the proceeds from the thousands who are drawn to Bethlehem from all over the world to enter the Church of the Nativity and descend the stone steps into the underground cave said to be the site of Christ's birth.

Japan's stop-go revellers

From Joe Joseph
Tokyo

The Japanese like to celebrate whatever is going. They have not yet taken to St Patrick's Day, but they love Christmas.

This year, the Japanese are celebrating Christmas and the closing days of 1988 with the stop-go high spirits of late-night revellers at a party. Every now and then someone turns down the music and suggests: "Shhh — you'll wake the neighbours."

The unexpected length of Emperor Hirohito's illness — the monarch, aged 87, has been bedridden with cancer since September — has tested the solemnity of the Japanese, who always like to do the right thing. This sense of propriety

has been strained over the past few days, partly because patience is wearing out, and partly because office workers traditionally see out the year by spending night after night getting drunk with colleagues in the local bar.

Japan Inc, that invisible force that shapes everything in the country from trade policies to the width of jacket lapels, has spread the word that high jinks and highballs betray a lack of respect for the Emperor's failing health: Japan must show self-restraint.

But even the Japanese can only be on best behaviour for so long. In the early days of the Emperor's illness, they behaved impeccably and prepared gloomily for the end of

an era. While many still care, many do not care enough to bring their lives to a standstill. They have reached a tolerable compromise. They pay lip-service to the new mood of self-restraint. Behind this mask, the majority of people have resumed normal life.

Department stores are covered in festive tinsel and *Jingle Bells* is piped through the loudspeakers. The number of late-night drinks in central Tokyo suggest that Japan's corporate warriors, who spend their spare time learning how to control their whisky, are not letting up in deference to the Emperor. The impression is that, for all but a small band of serious royalists, self-restraint has become a gesture.

The old smoke screen lifts to reveal a jocular Castro

From Geoffrey Matthews
Bogota

Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemingway and Graciano Marx were among its most illustrious aficionados, but it was a Marxist of a more ideological bent who made it his personal trade mark.

Even so, President Castro will not be fighting up this Christmas. Nor will the Cuban leader welcome in the new year puffing on one of his country's famous Habanos, once considered the best in the world and sought by multi-national tycoons and Hollywood producers.

"Yes, I've quit completely," he told the Colombia Weekly magazine *Cromos*. This was not exactly news, since reports have been circulating for more than three years that he had given up smoking. What was new was his admission that it had required a truly heroic revolutionary struggle, though he denied that it had been provoked by a diagnosis of cancer.

"They're always inventing things about me," he said. "But I have to

confess it was difficult to give up... worse, I still have nightmares in which I dream I am smoking and enjoying it. Then I have a kind of intimate shame because I feel I am betraying my own conscience."

He continued: "I cannot preach about the dangers of cancer, I cannot support the campaign against tobacco with a cigar in my lips or even in my hands. It would be disrespectful to the people... immoral."

Did he often have nightmares, asked Nohra Parra of *Cromos*, interviewing him in Havana. "Yes, and they're terrible, terrible! I dream about guns, about the (revolutionary) war and when I wake up I give thanks to God for having a country at peace. Yes, to God. Why not? I have a special God — as special as yours."

President Castro was in good form, demonstrating considerable jocular charm, reports Nohra Parra, who was among a group of Latin American journalists who accepted an invitation by the

Havana Government to visit Cuba and interview its leader three decades after the revolution which brought him to power.

In the interview he expressed misgivings about President Gorbachev's drive for Soviet economic and political reform.

Insisting that he was not against glasnost and perestroika, he told the visiting journalists: "We're making our own changes here, our own self-criticism, but in our own style, based on our own needs. And I want to make one thing very clear: any political and economic change I make will never be based on the capitalist system but will be taken within a socialist regimen."

"I much admire Gorbachev and I am in permanent contact with him, but I do think that he has some political advisers who are captured with capitalism, and if they continue as they are, they could do great damage to the Soviet people. I just hope I'm wrong."

Although relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba are said to

be strained, President Castro prefaced his remarks with a declaration of continuing loyalty to Moscow: "I'm tired of saying it, but my gratitude to the Soviet Union will be eternal because without its help we would never have been able to push ahead."

Yet, even in a rigid and closed regime built around a personality cult which has been compared to Stalinism, outside influences cannot be held at bay, the visiting journalist noted from the presence of groups of "punks" roaming the streets of Havana and the taste for rock music among the teenage children of government officials.

"Yes, but these little gangs as you call them are no more than a hundred in all, and the phenomenon is to be found only in Havana," the President replied. "The country and you will realize that there are five million young people who are building the revolution, loving it, defending it."

"But I must tell you that this influence reaches us not only by

television and films, nor across the 90 miles in distance from the United States. It also comes from Soviet youth (children of Soviet diplomats and military personnel based in Havana) through *perestroika*... we're watching them... a game of cat and mouse, but not to worry, this thing will not prosper."

Although at 62 he has now "lamentably" had to give up his favourite sport, basketball, he continues to keep fit by swimming in a pool "after midnight" and by spear fishing.

Why, 30 years after the triumph of the revolution, does he not wear civilian clothes but continue to don a military uniform? "I am the commander of Cuba's armed forces, so it's my natural uniform," he said. Roaring with laughter he continued: "But can you really imagine me being concerned about the latest style in lapels, shoulder pads, the cut of the pants?"

Did he fear death? "Definitely not. I've always been very close to her," the Cuban leader replied.



Dr Castro before his "truly heroic struggle" to stop smoking.

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TIMES DIARY SIMON BARNES

This is not a usual Saturday. Look, Holmes-like, at the curious incident of the football fixtures. There are no football fixtures — well, hardly any. Not just pro and semi-pro, even the Woking and District League is idle. But they are made of sterner stuff in the Denair Combined Counties League, and today Station Road, Chobham, Surrey, is the site of this column's match of the season as Chobham take on Westfield in the Clash of the Titans.

The sides occupy the bottom two places in the league. Chobham have nought points, having played 16, lost 16, scored four goals and conceded 52. But Westfield, since this column expressed an interest and dubbed them the Eddie Edwards of football, have been stung into life and put together a three-match unbeaten run that ended last Saturday when they were beaten by Cobham (as opposed to Chobham) 3-1.

Was this all the effect on morale of a barbed word processor? Well, no. For Westfield have joined the semi-pro ranks and are now paying two of their players. Paul Hampshire, formerly of Aldershot Youth and Godalming Town, has earned his money by scoring six in six games, and Sean Proby, signed from Chersey Town, also gets paid. "It's against our principles," said Dick Hill, their secretary. "But we had to do something to avoid relegation. We have to put up with this for the sake of the youngsters at the club."

Chobham, having no paid players, must rely on their home advantage and the support of the crowd — which they hope will be up to 150, instead of their usual dozen — to stir them to their first point, or even points, of the season. This column wishes joys of all seasons to both clubs.

Ice hockey is, of course, a game of skill and tactics, and that is why people go to watch it. Well, that's what its officials would have us believe, continually embarrassed as they are by the oldest joke in sport: "I went to a fight last night, and a hockey game broke out."

But the public do go for the skill, don't they? And they are sickened by the incidental violence? Well, maybe not. If you cast an eye through the United States organ of the sport, *The Hockey News*, you will find video ads for "Hockey's Bloodiest Fights and Knockouts" or, better still, an ad for "165 hours of good quality hockey fights which includes 12 hours from '87-'88". Another ad offers 126 hours of fights, including two hours starring New York Rangers' classic "goon", Chris Nilan.

All of this coincides with a season that has begun with a degree of violence remarkable even by the standards of America's National Hockey League — so much so that Lloyd's of London, which underwrites the players' disability insurance, has been getting worried. There was a problem when the policy came up for renewal in 1986, and it fears there will be more trouble the next time around in 1990.

Penalties for violence have risen by more than 90 per cent over the past 10 years. It is not a question of spontaneity: "When you have somebody on your team whose sole purpose is to punch somebody's lights out, it's a tactic," said one team manager. "It has become a bit of a problem."

On a more sedate plane, I can report that the latest *Widen* is now available — that for 1883. It is part of a series of reprints well known in this space and contains a fascinating nugget on the highest score ever recorded in a match in England, when the Orleans Club scored 920 against Rickling Green. G.F. Vernon made 259 and A.H. Trevor 338 as they put on an intimidating 605 for the second wicket. Another player narrowly missed his triple century, but he was a bowler: he took three wickets for 291. Tactic irregulars have long believed in the tactic of buying wickets, but tactics are for use, not over-use.

BARRY FANTONI



"Don't tell me — it's Terry Lawless"

It comes as something of a disappointment to me to realize that sex cannot sell everything. Almost everything, yes, but not six-day cycle racing. Six-day cycle racing used to be a big deal, drawing crowds of up to 100,000. Now this bizarre sport, numbing minds and backsides of players and spectators alike, is in decline. Across Europe, promoters have brought in things like food, music, stunts and circus acts — and still the crowds fall.

And so, at Maastricht, Munich, Bremen and Dortmund, they have tried the added lure of strippers. So far as gate receipts are concerned, the ladies have attracted a tidal wave of indifference. A former world champion, Patrick Sercu, said: "Strippers will not save six-day cycling. There are better places in town for that."

Meanwhile, a bicycle is the perfect Christmas present for any 7ft person who has everything else. Craig Mauck, of AAA Rearview Bicycle Repair, is contacting all 25 of America's National Basketball Association teams, offering to make bikes for any of its giants. He is already fulfilling a commission for Ralph Sampson, of Golden State Warriors, who stands 7ft 4in.

Hereford United football club has sent a Christmas card to Margaret Thatcher and Colin Moynihan, Minister of Sport. It depicts Santa Claus proffering a fiver at a turnstile and being asked in return for his identity card. He replies: "But I only come once a year." And only then if you've been good all year.

A short story by Deborah Moggach

How I learnt to be a real countrywoman

DIANA LEADBETTER



We were sitting in the kitchen, opening Christmas cards. There was one from Sheila and Paul, whoever they were, and one from our bank manager, and one from my Aunt May which had been recycled from the year before. The last one was a brown envelope. Edwin opened it.

"My God!" he said. "These bureaucrats have a quaint sense of timing." He tugged at his beard — a newly acquired mannerism. Since we had moved to the country he'd grown a beard; it made him look slightly like Jeremy Irons. Slightly.

The letter was from our county council, and it said they were going to build a ring road right through our local wood.

Now, our local wood wasn't up to much but it was all we had. It was more a copse, really, across the field from our cottage. Like everything in the country it was surrounded by barbed wire, but I could worm my way through with the children, and amid acres of ploughed fields it was at least somewhere to go, and from which we could then proceed home again. Such places are necessary, with small children (eight, six and three).

It was mostly brambles, and trees I couldn't name because I had always lived in London, and there was a small, black pond which smelt like damp laundry. Not a lot grew in the wood, except Diet Pepsi cans. But I loved it, and now I knew it was condemned I appreciated its tangled rustlings, just as one listens more intently to a person who is going to die.

"A two-lane dual carriageway!" said Edwin. "Right past our front door. Thundering pantechinons!" That exploded from him like an oath. He went off to work, and every time the children broke something that morning, which was often, we cried "Thundering pantechinons!" But that wasn't going to keep them away.

We live in a pretty, but not pretty enough to be protected, part of Somerset. People were going to campaign against this ring road, but the only alternative route was through our MP's daughter's riding school, so there wasn't much hope.

That afternoon I drove off to look for holly. When you live in the country you spend your whole time in the car. In London, of course, you simply buy holly round the corner, which is much better for the environment. I spent two hours burning up valuable fossil fuels, the children squabbling over their crisps in the back seat, and only returned with six sprigs, most of whose berries had fallen off by the time we had hung them up.

This was our first Christmas in the country, the first of our new pure life, and I was trying to work up a festive spirit unaided by the crass high-street commercialism that Edwin was so relieved to escape. Me too, of course.

Have you noticed how dark it gets, and how soon, in the country? When I returned home our wood was simply a denser dot against the sodium glow of our local town, the one whose traffic was going to be eased at our expense. This time next Christmas, I thought, the thundering pantechinons will be rattling our window panes and filling our rooms with lead pollution. It will be just like Camden Town all over again, but without the conversation.

That's what I missed, you see. Edwin didn't because he has inner resources. He's the only person I have ever met who has actually read *The Favourite*. He has a spare, linear mind and fine features; nobody would ever think of calling him Ed. When we lived in London, in Camden Town, he taught graphics. But then his art school was dissolved into another one and he lost his job. The government was British and philistine and London was full of fumes, so he said we should move to the country and I followed in the hot slipstream of his despair.

"Look at the roses growing in our children's cheeks!" he cried out, startling me, soon after we moved.

though he probably heard his soapy theme tune as he took off his bicycle clips. I never dreamed I would work out who all the characters were, they all looked the same, pen-sticked under the art lights with their streaky perms, but to my shame I did, and worse. I minded. I even hammed my time when I was standing at the sink, digging all the slugs out of our organic vegetables.

Perhaps, I thought, if I joined this anti-road campaign I could meet intelligent men like Jonathan Porritt. Perhaps they didn't all live in NW1.

Most of them seemed to; that was the trouble. I missed Camden Town, where everybody worked in the media. At the children's primary school, where they had cutbacks, parents donated scrap paper, and they were always things like transcripts of South Bank Shows. I used to read them, on the other side of the children's drawings, so I could surprise Edwin when we were watching TV and I knew what Leonard Bernstein was going to say. Then there was the time when I could tell him who did it in a Ruth Rendell book, because I had found the last page in our local photocopy.

Edwin thought all this was futile, but Edwin had inner resources. I only had the children. You can't have both.

And then, on Boxing Day, I had a brainwave.

It was freezing outside and the cat had had an accident in front of the Aga. Well, not an accident; she just hadn't bothered to go outside. Edwin was clearing it up with some newspaper when he stopped, and read a corner.

"Listen to this," he said. "Leicester County Council is spending £19,000 on four underpasses, specially constructed for wildlife."

At the time I wasn't listening. I was throwing old roast potatoes into the hen bucket and working out how long it was since Edwin and I had made love.

"It's to save a colony of Golden Crested Newts," he said. We hadn't even on Christmas night, after some wonderful Australian Cabernet Sauvignon. The last time was Thursday week, when we had been agreeing how awful his mother was. This always drew us close. We had one or two such mild, but reliable, aphrodisiacs. Usually, however, our feet were too cold, or one of the children suddenly woke up, or we had just been reading something depressing about the disappearing rain forests.

Then I thought about the campaign, and as he started washing the floor I caught up with what he had said about the newts.

happened, last Christmas. I was brought up in Swiss Cottage and spent my childhood with my nose pressed against shop windows, first toys then bikes then clothes. If a bird was brown and boring I presumed it was a sparrow. Frogs were simply pear-shaped diagrams of reproductive organs which we sniggered at, during school, fearfully.

Then Edwin and I married and we went to live in Camden Town. Its streets were bedimmed with sulphuric emissions and we could only recognize the changing seasons by the daffodil frieze at Sketchleys (Spring) and the Back-to-School promotion at Ryman's (Autumn). Edwin, waking up to a dawn chorus of activated car alarms, hungered for honest country toil and started buying books, published by Faber and illustrated by woodcuts, which told him how to clamp his beetroot and flay his ox.

A romantic puritan, he gazed across at the whores' drawers curtains of the people opposite and bemoaned the greed of our decade, saying quite accurately that even intellectuals were starting to talk about house prices. We lived in a flat, and my contact with nature was to grow basil, the Savoy Hotel, and coriander, the Eighties one, on our balcony, fighting them in with a dining fork. I bought them at Clifton Nurseries, London's most metropolitan garden centre, where I liked spotting TV personalities pushing Bournemouth.

That evening I didn't watch TV. I looked through Edwin's library instead. He was in his potting shed, running off campaign leaflets on his printing press. Nursing my burning hands, I leafed through his *Complete British Wild Flowers*. I had no idea there were so many plants, and with such names — Sneezewort and Dodder, Purg-buckthorn and Bitter Fleabane, Maids Bonnets and Biting Stonecrop (or Welcome-home-

husband-though-never-so-drunk). Poetic and unfamiliar, they danced in my head as I gazed at the eternally blooming watercolours. The book divided them into habitats, which helped. I took note of the "Woodland" section, writing down the names of the most endangered species. I hadn't learnt so much since school.

When Edwin returned he was surprised I was missing *Minder*. So was I.

"I want to learn more about the countryside," I said. He was terribly pleased. We started talking about his youth in Dorset, where his father was a vicar and he a pale, only child. We talked about the years before graphic department politics, and children, and trying to find people rich enough to buy his tables.

"I wanted to be Edward Lear," he said. "I wanted to explore the world and find everything curious." "Wasn't he lonely?"

He nodded. "But what an artist." He paused, tugging his beard. "Everybody has a time when they should have lived." "When's yours?"

"1890."

"Think about how much it would have hurt at the dentist's."

He laughed. "When's yours?"

"Now."

That night, despite our cold feet, we made love —

the first time since that Thursday. He even licked my ears, something I had forgotten I adored. He used to do it quite a lot in London.

Afterwards he said: "I've been worried about you, Ruth. Have I been bossy?"

I shook my head: "I'm liking it better, now."

Mabel Cudlipp had news. She was a fellow mother. I had seen her at the school gates for a year now, but we had never really talked. To tell the truth, I thought the mothers here looked boring compared with the London ones, who arrived at school breathing wine fumes from Groucho lunches. But when the spring term began I started chatting, and it turned out Mabel Cudlipp had some in her pond.

"Great Crested Newts," she said. "They're very rare. In fact, they've been protected since 1981."

"You couldn't possibly spare one or two?"

She nodded. "They're hibernating now, but we can look when it gets warmer."

So then she introduced herself, and so did I, and she even brought her daughter back for tea.

You might wonder why I didn't tell Edwin. The trouble was his honesty. Once, he found a £5 note in Oxford Circus and took it to the police. Nobody claimed it, of course, because nobody thought anyone could be

that decent. Another time he drove 22 miles in freezing fog to pay somebody back when I had overcharged them for eggs. But that was when we were quarrelling, so you could call it marital politics.

Nor did I involve the children, for the same reason. Throughout the spring, I worked away during school hours, accompanied only by Abbie, who is three and who couldn't sneak on me. She carried the trowel on our daily trips to the wood, which I now considered ours, its every clump of couch grass dear to me. When boxes arrived from obscure plant nurseries I told Edwin that I was really getting to grips with the garden. He was delighted, of course. While he battled against the bureaucrats — the Stop the Road campaign wasn't getting anywhere — I glowed, my cheeks grew roses, my fingernails were full of mud. I felt as heavy as a fruit with my secret; I hadn't felt so happy since I was pregnant.

I was also becoming something of an expert. For instance, on *potamogeton densus* and *riccia fluitans*. Latin names to you, but essential aquatic oxygenators to me. I bought them at my local garden centre, which had an Ornamental Pond section, and carried them to the wood in plastic bags. I had dug out the pond, and tured its sides.

Then there was *triturus cristatus*, or perhaps *cristati* because there were four of them, courtesy of Mabel. Perhaps you don't know what this is. It is the Great Crested Newt. The male has a silver streak on the tail, and at breeding time develops a high, crinkled crest and a bright orange belly. The female, without crest but with skin flap above and below the tail, is 16.5cm long overall, slightly longer than the male. I was feeling slightly longer than the male; more vigorous and powerful.

For good measure, and why not, Abbie and I placed some surprising plants in the wood too, garden plants, and some blue Himalayan Poppies. I had to use my Barclaycard for most of this, the whole operation was costing a fortune. And then there was my *coup de grace*, the orchids. We planted the Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*), the Lizard, and the Bird's Nest (*neottia nidusavis*), all extremely rare, and purchased from a small nursery in Suffolk whose address I had found in the back of *Amateur Gardener*. I cut off all the labels, of course, I'm not a complete fool. I even went to university once. I planted them tenderly in the patches I had cleared amongst the brambles. Above us the birds sang, and the watery spring sunshine gleamed on the ivy which, lush as leather, trousered the trees. I even knew the trees' names now.

In all those weeks Edwin never visited the wood. He never had time. In the country people never have time to do things like that, unless someone comes to lunch. It's like living in London and never visiting the Tate Gallery until some American friends arrive. Edwin was busy doing all the things that people who live in the country really do, like driving 20 miles to collect the repaired lawnmower, and then doing it all over again because the lawnmower still didn't work. Like driving 30 miles to find some matching tiles for our roof, and discovering that the place had been turned into a Bejams. So he never knew.

They didn't build the ring road past us; they're building it through the riding stables. This is because our wood has been designated a site of outstanding scientific interest. They've put up a proper wooden fence, and a sign. They're even thinking of building a car park. And instead of thundering pantechinons we've now got thundering Remmies full of new-watchers.

It's Boxing Day today and people have come from all over. It's been really interesting. They knock on our door, and ask the way, and admire our cottage — bonists in particular are very polite. We're doing a brisk trade in eggs, too. Ours are guaranteed salmonella-free because the hens are fed on my organic bread, which is so disgusting we're always throwing it away. Sometimes the people even leave their children here, to play with mine, while they tramp across the field to look at the orchids. Danny, that's my eldest, has even started saying things like "mega-cru-cial". Now we have our own traffic jams I don't miss Camden Town at all.

What Edwin feels about this is best described as mixed. Still, his furniture business is booming because it's only two miles away and even he is materialistic enough to put up a notice, with a sepia photograph and a map, pointing them in the right direction. And so much has happened during the day that we don't have to talk about his mother any more.

When spring comes, and the flowers start blooming, I've decided to start doing teas. I'll buy Old-Style Spiced Buns at Marks and Sparks and throw away the packets.

I've learnt a lot this past year, you see, about the real country way of doing things.

Deborah Moggach has published eight novels, including the acclaimed *Porky* and her latest, *Driving in the Dark*. A book of short stories, *Smile and Other Stories*, has just been published by Penguin, and she has recently completed a television serial, *Stolen*, about kidnapped children. She lives in Camden, London





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GIFT FROM THE PAST

The persistence of Christmas is one of those mysteries that ought not to be probed too coldly. It is a massive collective celebration, one enormous universal birthday party at which it is everyone's birthday at once.

It is an excuse for sentimentality and personal indulgence, for mutual generosity and general good will. It reverses most of the dour priorities which govern the rest of the year, focusing on the joys of childhood, on the gathering of happy families, on cheerfully candle-lit churches and the familiar words and tunes of simple carols.

None of this could be invented by Act of Parliament; and no Cabinet committee decides whether we will have another Christmas this year or not. For it has all the momentum of a people's festival — vulgar, unstoppable, traditional, profane, and wonderful.

To explain it prosaically we would need to know a thousand times more about human nature than we do. But let us be thankful we do not; it is better to take it at face value, as a unique, innocent and mysterious gift from our own past to make the present more bearable.

Yet at its heart is a myth. Myths and legends have their power because they resonate in deep human experience, which they express and enlarge. A myth, for that purpose, does not have to be true, but nor does it have to be mere invention.

The Christmas myth tells of pregnant young Mary and her stalwart husband Joseph being compelled by law to go to Bethlehem, and finding nowhere there to stay; and of their taking refuge in an out-house, where Mary was safely delivered of her child. It is so simple. Something like it must have happened, for it happens every day.

It is about the vulnerability of life and the precariousness of human arrangements, and of ordinary people overcoming them — making space for themselves and for new humanity, so to speak, in spite of all the difficulties. In insisting on its universal significance the Christian faith is almost stating the obvious.

But it does not start or end there, for this birth had a deeper meaning. The myth also tells how mankind had been living under a primeval curse and sentence, and how the Christ-Child was sent from God to rescue it and lead it to deliverance as Moses had led the Israelites. The story moves inexorably from

Christmas to Good Friday and then to Easter, travelling on parallel lines to many an ordinary human life and hence a source of courage and inspiration to anyone who knows it.

Even to describe it in such a way, however, is to treat it as someone else's myth, the stuff of fairy-tales, whereas it is the common property of Western civilization, our own: it lies at its very foundation. Christmas is a return to those roots, a reminder that for all its technological arrogance life in the modern world still rests on such pillars as these, which are indeed quite solid, mythical or not.

There was a time when every detail of the story — the Fall in Genesis, the Nativity in Luke, even John's Apocalypse — were accepted without question as a precise and accurate record. The scholars and theologians, sceptical or faithful, are now agreed that such a literal reading is not justified or demanded; but the power of the story never did rest on such assumptions — nor ever needed them.

In the mediaeval mystery plays it was perfectly acceptable to invent whole new episodes in order to freshen or decorate the basic narrative, and no one protested that they were not in the canon. They understood that myth better: it is the modern literal mind that condemns the ancient myth as inaccurate, and which talks of a necessary suspension of disbelief in order to approach it properly. But Christmas is not an intellectual exercise; it is an experience of the mind, heart and soul; it calls for the suspension not of disbelief but of narrowness and reserve.

In a world where life can be ruined or destroyed in a tragic instant — the Armenian earthquake and the Lockerbie air disaster are only the most recent awful examples — Christmas is not cruel mockery, but a challenge. It sees human suffering not as the point of departure for despair, but as an opportunity for people to make room for humanity in spite of it. Thus have the Soviet people and world responded to the Armenian disaster; with quiet strength the little Scottish town begins to rebuild itself. Christmas is about optimism, and about faith in the race's capacity to rise above itself. Its annual celebration is a moral and spiritual tonic; and a civilization which had lost the taste for it would be a bleak one indeed.

O LITTLE TOWN

There will be little joy in Bethlehem this Christmas. The town which should symbolize peace and good will is riven by political discord and civil warfare. The lights are out, the shops are shut and road blocks and metal detectors stand between the Christian pilgrims and their shrine.

Bethlehem has long been accustomed to division. The Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian churches who all worship at the Church of the Nativity cannot even agree on the proper date for Christmas. This part of the world so rich in Christian meaning has, in addition, become a battle arena for Arabs and Jews.

That fighting now involves the *intifada*, the Arab uprising which started 12 months ago and still shows little sign of being quelled. It is out of respect, so they say, for more than 330 Palestinians who have so far died in it, that Bethlehem's Arab inhabitants have darkened this year's Christmas celebrations.

But this month has brought hope as well as gloom to the West Bank. Ten days ago Mr Yasser Arafat renounced terrorism and recognized Israel, thereby fulfilling the United States' most basic conditions for dialogue with his Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). One might not believe that the PLO means what it says, but even the fact that such a fissiparous organization can say it is significant. The swift and positive response which came from Washington opens a new page in Levantine history.

What comes to be written on that page is another matter. Mr Arafat's change of tune was not achieved without some discord in his band. His efforts must soon start to show results, or his statesmanship could herald his own destruction. While the US response was timely and constructive, it will not long satisfy Mr Arafat's hardline PLO critics. The rush of diplomatic and rhetorical activity in the last fortnight still leaves one question above all others: can Mr Arafat deliver the entire PLO he claims to lead, in obedience to the decisions and new direction of the leadership?

British intervention, in the form of Mr William Waldegrave's visit to Tunis and Jerusalem next month, will help to sustain the momentum towards answering this question until Mr George Bush enters the White House. But the push towards peace must effectively come from Washington.

How effective that will be is a matter for speculation. Since Mr Arafat's speech to the UN, the Israelis have at last formed a new

Government. While the new coalition contains the Labour Party, the balance of power lies with the right-wing Likud. With Mr Yitzhak Shamir as Prime Minister and his close political ally, Mr Moshe Arens, in charge of foreign affairs, it is hard to see much scope for future flexibility.

The new policy guidelines emerging from Jerusalem represent no great novelty. The path which Mr Shamir is willing to tread remains that mapped out at Camp David a decade ago. He will countenance no more than a degree of local autonomy for the occupied territories, negotiated not with the PLO but with Israel's Arab neighbours and moderate Arab representatives from the West Bank and Gaza.

This is less than realistic. It fails, in the first place, to take account of the pressures on Israel's moderate Arab neighbours — and on those who, on the West Bank, have bravely shown their heads above the parapet as peace-brokers. It is also doubtful if the inhabitants of the territories, after more than a year of lethal scrapping with the Israeli Army, will be satisfied with the autonomy that Mr Shamir envisages.

There is still, however, a glimmer of light this Christmas. For one thing, even Mr Shamir perceived the need for Israel to respond to Mr Arafat's initiatives. While that response was uncompromising and dismissive, one could not realistically have expected anything else. He was establishing his Government's position at the start of a period during which it will face unprecedented pressure to yield ground. There are doubts about the effectiveness of US pressure. But the Israeli economy puts Jerusalem in a poor condition to resist.

Moreover, Israeli policy should be consistent. During the last two years of the recent national Government, Mr Peres pursued a foreign policy of his own, which was largely at odds with that of his own prime minister. However much the West might have welcomed his more flexible approach, the only result was internal mistrust and incoherence.

In fact, Mr Shamir, although no innovator, is not beyond beating time to someone else's tune, especially to a variation by someone whom he trusts, like Mr Arens. If he does, he knows that the Cabinet will move with him. This may not sound much like good cheer for Bethlehem. But at this time of year, it is some comfort that hope has some chance of contesting the ring with the old familiarities of cynicism.

Art appreciation

From Mr Richard Kingzett
Sir, In 1937 the Städtische Museum, Elberfeld, sold Picasso's "Acrobat and Young Harlequin", which had been given to them 20 years earlier. They sold the picture at the instigation of the Nazis, who regarded it as an example of *entartete Kunst* — degenerate art — and it then realised the Swiss franc equivalent of £3,800.

Last month in London the picture sold for £20,900,000 (report, November 29). Each generation sees pictures through different eyes from its predecessors, and I wonder if the Government plan to allow museums to sell off unwanted art is wise in suggesting that our own museums should follow National Socialist policy and sell from their collections pictures that may seem uninteresting or irrelevant at this particular time.

When, in 1930, the Herzog

Anton Ulrich Museum in Brunswick needed money to repair its building, it was proposed that it should sell Vermeer's "Lady with a Wine Glass" to finance the operation. This suggestion raised such an outcry from colleagues in other German museums that the idea was dropped, the money was found by other means, and today the Vermeer remains as one of the special treasures of that marvelous collection.

I hope that English museums and cathedrals will follow Brunswick's example in this matter, rather than that of the Nazis.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD KINGZETT,
Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd.,
43 Old Bond Street, W1.

Charity co-ordination

From Mr F. J. E. Hurst
Sir, If only out of enlightened self-interest, I am only too willing to

contribute to an appeal for funds to help to conquer cancer, and indeed do so. But by now I am confused about the number of organizations involved in raising such funds.

Appeals are brought to our attention through the post, in press advertisements, and through references on the radio and television. Genuine collectors for different appeals have been known to operate more or less at the same time even on this road.

Which appeal should I and my family support? Is there any reason why the various organizations involved should not merge, or agree to share their resources and so economize on administrative costs, making life easier for contributors like myself?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HURST,
Hillside, 72 Ballywillan Road,
Portrush, Co. Antrim.
December 15.

How to discourage the credit boom

From Mr Hugo Kirby
Sir, I have been put on the spot by my colleagues to suggest an alternative to the concept, which I believe to be rather naive, that raising interest base rates from 10 to 11, 12 or even 13 per cent curbs spending by consumers already prepared to borrow at interest rates exceeding 30 or even 40 per cent to buy a new fridge or whatever else on HP.

As in any case of supply and demand, if controlling demand does not work, one is forced to look at controlling the supply.

Would not making it illegal to lend money at an annual percentage rate of twice (or even thrice) the base rates not only have a popular appeal (curbing usury) but also discourage exactly that sort of credit which is encouraging those who cannot afford it to fuel the spending boom.

Popular and effective — irresistible.
Yours faithfully,
HUGO KIRBY
(Managing Director),
The Ashley Group plc,
2nd Floor, Harbour Yard,
Chelsea Harbour, SW10,
December 10.

From Miss Françoise Poulain
Sir, I recently applied to a local building society for a cheque guarantee card. Though I have some £500 residing with this building society I was refused a card. I quote, "because you are just 18, you have no existing credit or store cards, and are not an owner-occupier."

I am 18 and though I now live at home, on a temporary basis, I have supported myself since leaving school slightly before my sixteenth birthday. My bank allowed me a cheque card at 16 when I opened the account.

Would the building society consider me more credit-worthy if I had amassed thousands of pounds' worth of plastic debt that I could not repay?
Yours sincerely,
FRANÇOISE POULAIN,
Brookhurst,
York Crescent,
Aldershot, Hampshire.
December 14.

From Mr J. K. McA. Tod
Sir, Mr John Perry (December 12) is quite correct that credit issues in excess of goods and services available for purchase is the direct cause of inflation. But banks and other financial houses which issue this credit have no direct responsibility for limiting the credit issue to match the goods available. Their job is simply to make their business pay.

For Government to undertake control of the credit issue exposes their operations to too much political pressure, particularly near election time since the results of inflationary operations may not be felt for a year or more. We need

a non-political body to be responsible for the credit issue.

Many would say that this would be impossible for so sensitive a task but in fact this nation is particularly good at responsible non-party public bodies. A more potent objection would be the reluctance of any sovereign Government to hand over such a potent power.
Yours faithfully,
J. K. McA. TOD
(Member, Economic Research Council),
Thorn, Butts Lawn,
Brookhurst,
Hampshire.
December 15.

From Mr Christopher Godley
Sir, One must differentiate between genuine debt and planned payment. Using a credit card for routine purchases, in order to make a single payment at the end of each month (as most people must surely be encouraged to do, by the penal rates of interest) does not constitute debt, any more than settling an electricity bill at the end of each quarter.

Genuine indebtedness should surely only include those accounts which remain outstanding beyond the normal payment date and hence start attracting interest. I would be interested to know if recent figures make allowances for these two factors.
Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER GODLEY,
Four Fins,
Marley Lane,
Haslemere, Surrey.
December 19.

From Mr A. A. Bentley
Sir, During recent times there has been much discussion about the use, and misuse, of credit cards, and separately, the value of education.

A combination of the two occurred recently in one of my A-level physics lessons. We were discussing the properties of ultra-violet light, after which we had a practical demonstration. Assorted objects were placed in the light, some of which glowed.

One student placed his Barclaycard in the light, and to our surprise a copy of the Visa dove appeared in the middle of the card, covering about a third of its area. After further discussion we decided that this was an anti-forgery device, and not as one student suggested "a CND mole in the Visa system".

This did prompt me to think, though this may not be the CND dove of peace, it might be the Visa dove of peace-of-mind.
Yours faithfully,
A. A. BENTLEY,
74 Gitch Road,
Kettering, Northamptonshire.
December 12.

Channel tunnel delay

From Mr K. W. Groves
Sir, Your report (December 14) that the Channel tunnel is now six months behind schedule, before the boring of the undersea rail tunnels and the real problems have begun, should cause great concern. It will not surprise those who are familiar with the difficulties of bored tunnelling. Honshu-Hokaido in Japan, recently completed, which is the only tunnel of comparable length, was 10 years late and three times budget. It is therefore naive for analysts to report that "the delay can be made up". They cannot know.

I suggest that it is highly unlikely that this project will be completed with private finance and yet this was the precondition of Government support. One would therefore hope that alternative strategies are being developed in the Department of Transport for implementation if construction delays exhaust private funding.

There are a variety of choices. What is not tenable is the current policy that the British Government will "walk away" from the scheme if it fails. Others won't.
Yours faithfully,
K. W. GROVES,
Park Cottage, 3 Park Lane,
Sevenoaks, Kent.
December 15.

Status of Eritrea

From the Ambassador of the People's Republic of Ethiopia
Sir, Despite our efforts to put across our principles and unambiguous stand on the issue (the problem in northern Ethiopia) some sectors of the media, including your newspaper, seem determined to ignore them. Your leading article of December 3 is a case in point.

The whole message of the article seems to revolve around the misguided idea that Eritrea has been "forcibly annexed", and therefore the United Nations should intervene. The UN played its role when it was needed. The situation now is totally different. The conflict in the northern part of Ethiopia is an internal matter of a sovereign state, which is absolutely clear to the UN and the Organisation of African Unity.

The Eritrean people, through their democratically elected members of the then assembly, realized their right to self-determination when they opted to abolish the federal status for a complete reunion with their Motherland in 1962.

Unity was not actually effected at the stroke of a pen. It rather took an evolutionary process of four years for Eritrean members of

Flooding on the Fen

From Mr John Bleek
Sir, Dr H. E. Mason (November 25) foresees a major disaster as a result of the proposed new Western settlement near Wilburton, Cambridgeshire, being inundated by flood waters. In particular she is concerned by the increased flood risk represented by rising sea levels resulting from the "greenhouse effect".

As consulting engineers for the settlement, may we assure Dr Mason and your readers that a properly engineered flood-protection embankment will be constructed on its south, east and west sides. The northern part will be constructed on higher land and the boundary will not require such protection.

Design standards for the embankment, agreed with Anglian Water Authority, will ensure that Western's flood-protection standards will be at least equivalent to those used in the protection of London. The design of the embankment will take into account predicted increases in sea level along with all other relevant factors such as the long-term subsidence of the East Anglian region.
Yours faithfully,
JOHN BLEEK,
Ove Arup and Partners,
13 Fitzroy Street, W1.
December 21.

Parliament to come to terms with a final decision. First and foremost, they abrogated the penal laws of the colonial era and adopted Ethiopian penal laws. Eritrea's standard flag was replaced by the tricolours of Ethiopia. This was followed some years later by the decision to unite with Ethiopia.

The countries mentioned in the editorial and the United Nations kept their "silence" out of their commitment to respect the wishes of the vast majority of the Eritrean people and because there was nothing illegal that would have prompted them to act otherwise. That is why the "dossier" related to this question is closed once and for all.

Yours sincerely,
TEFERRA HAILE-SELASSIE,
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
17 Prince's Gate, SW7.
December 7.

From Mr H. P. Elliott
Sir, As Mr R. M. Purcell rightly says (December 12), it is now a direct Soviet interest to bring the cruel Eritrean war, which neither

Defence of family welfare system

From the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security

Sir, Hermione Parker's article, "The meanest trap of all" (December 20), began by complaining about the so-called mythology surrounding the social security benefit system. But what she went on to say, in an apparently authoritative way, contained no such mythology, as horror tales worthy of the Brothers Grimm, and with about as much relationship with reality.

For example, at a time when all parties are agreed on the need for the Government to do all it can to publicise family credit and encourage take-up, what is the point of Hermione Parker alleging that claimants will be faced with "queues, the constantly engaged telephones, lost Giro, and fraud squads"?

No one is forced to queue for family credit. The process of claiming is handled by post. It can be paid direct to a bank or building society. People who have enquiries to make about eligibility or the progress of a claim can enquire through their local Social Security office, who have direct telephone access to the Family Credit Unit.

Presumably the mention of the fraud squads was meant to make some general point about the way in which the DSS views all its customers. If so it was contemptible.

In fact Hermione Parker really seems to want it all ways when it comes to attacking family credit. On the one hand, she alleges that because it is paid for six months at a time, irrespective of changing circumstances, it cannot cope with the changing family circumstances and uncertainty faced by poorer claimants. But then she alleges that this very arrangement means that "it is unlikely that all those drawing family credit really need it". That really is like a defence of

alternative alibi for Hermione Parker's argument. One of the virtues of family credit as a benefit is that it is available to a broader range of people than FIS (family income supplement) was, recognising that the margins may have been drawn too tightly in the past.

While everyone agrees that take-up is not yet up to desirable levels, one thing it is possible to deduce reasonably from the expenditure pattern so far is that those with the higher levels of entitlement are already claiming successfully. This hardly supports a view that the benefit is going to people who really do not need it; and it is rather dishonest, in the next breath, to extol the virtues of child benefit as a satisfactory alternative. Whatever the merits or otherwise of child benefit, there can be no doubt at all that it goes to many people who really could be said not to need it.

It is possible, by selective example, to make a contrived, hypothetical points about people still being better off out of work than in. Fewer than 20,000 people currently in work would be better off unemployed and claiming income support. Only a quarter of those people have families with children (i.e., eligible for family credit).

The number of people who have a potential out-of-work income that comes within 90 per cent of their current wage is less than 100,000. In any case, arguments of this kind tend to ignore totally the fact that most people, whether they have families or not, do want the dignity of a job. Family credit brings that comfortably within the reach of many.
Yours faithfully,
PETER LLOYD,
Department of Health and Social Security,
Richmond House,
79 Whitehall, SW1.
December 23.

Space achievement

From Mr Kenneth W. Gatland
Sir, Many congratulations to cosmonaut Vladimir Titov and Musa Manarov on their epic achievement on December 21 of a year-long space flight (report, December 22). They and their support teams — engineers, scientists, doctors — have written a golden chapter in the annals of space exploration.

I was privileged to discuss the future of space exploration with Yuri Gagarin in 1964 and, in London, celebrated the triumph of Valentina Tereshkova with the first space lady herself, also in 1964. We in Britain who follow the development of international space programmes day by day salute Titov and Manarov for their supreme courage and enterprise.

When the first human explorers arrive on Mars their names — and those of other long-duration cosmonauts — will be recalled with honour as pathfinders.
Yours etc.,
KENNETH W. GATLAND
(President, British Interplanetary Society, 1974-76),
10 Brook Mead,
Ewell,
Epsom, Surrey.
December 22.

TV standards

From Mr Philip Middleton
Sir, Apropos Mary-Anne Sieghart's article "Keeping ITV's jewels" (December 13) there is a simpler way to ensure that TV companies have enough money to make decent programmes and then ensure that they satisfy the viewing public while still paying a decent levy for their licences.

The levy should come not on presentation of the licence, but periodically based on viewing figures. The more successful the programme the bigger the levy. If you can't attract audiences you lose your licence.

Profits after production works should likewise be levied, which will remove the temptation to buy in American and Australian junk.
Yours etc.,
PHILIP MIDDLETON,
Dashwood House,
69 Old Broad Street, EC2.
December 13.

side can win, to an end, and to put pressure on Mengistu to come to terms. It is also a Western interest, particularly for Britain. And the UN has a key role.

Britain administered Eritrea for 10 years after World War II. Before leaving Britain, with America, got the UN General Assembly to adopt in 1950 the plan under which Eritrea would obtain full autonomy within an Ethiopian federation.

When the Emperor annexed Eritrea in 1962, we made no protest. But this remains the unfinished item on the agenda of the General Assembly. The war which followed the annexation has greatly escalated in violence and mass starvation ever since Mengistu seized power in 1974, supported by Soviet military aid and hardware on a huge scale.

I know many senior Eritreans who look back with gratitude on the period of British administration. They still hope that Britain will not forget, but will press the UN to tackle its unfinished business.
Yours sincerely,
HUGH P. ELLIOTT,
Flat 8, Rosewood Lodge,
79 Wickham Road,
Shirley,
Croydon, Surrey.
December 15.

Egg fever

From Mr F. David Skidmore
Sir, The science of bacteriology is quantitative. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should not only have been regularly monitoring the recent salmonella infestation rates in poultry flocks and infection of eggs but publishing the results in a form which the general public could understand. Routine random testing must, in future, be mandatory, and the results should be available for public inspection.

This random sampling technique has been an established function of ministry vets since the 1920s. We should remember that the safety of milk supplies in the UK through tuberculin testing of cattle was provided in the face of concerted protest by farmers and dairies.

There was no excuse for Mrs Currie's lax use of language in the television interview which properly led to her resignation. However, there is no morality in compensating any egg producer who is shown by bacteriological testing to be the purveyor of contaminated food. Recompense for the financial effects of the minister's verbal inexactitude should only go to those producers whose eggs are sterile.
Yours faithfully,
DAVID SKIDMORE,
109 Harley Street, W1.
December 20.

Father's footsteps

From Mr Henry G. Burton
Sir, Mr R. Josiah Pratt (December 3) mentions three generations of his ancestors who were successively vicars of St Stephen's in the City from 1824 to 1911. There are at least three instances of fathers and sons whose successive incumbencies spanned more than a century.

The record seems to belong to Edward Beadon and his son Frederick, who were rectors of North Stoneham, in Hampshire, from 1760 to 1879. The father served from 1760 to 1810 and his son from 1810 to 1879.
Yours faithfully,
HENRY G. BURTON,
7 Amhurst Court,
Grange Road, Cambridge.

From Mrs F. V. B. Wills
Sir, My late husband's great-grandfather, the Reverend Francis Edward Wills, and his grandfather the Reverend Edward Francis Wills, and his father Canon Francis Edward Broome Wills, followed each other without a break, from 1806 to 1913 as rectors of St Peter's Church, Upper Slaughter, Gloucestershire.
Yours faithfully,
ALICE M. WILLS,
The Dingle,
Upper Slaughter,
Gloucestershire.

Sweetness and light

From Mr John Elton
Sir, We are told by Michael Palmer (December 17) that the choice of wine to accompany dessert ("fruit and nuts") is comparatively easy. I wonder if he has heard an old French adage confided to me by an elderly English francophile:
Vin sur fruit — nul!
Fruit sur vin — divin!
For which I dare to offer a loose translation:
Wine with fruit — a thing to miss!
Fruit to follow — heavenly bliss!
Yours faithfully,
JOHN ELTON,
3 Raymer Court,
St Albans, Hertfordshire.
December 17.

TINBERGEN

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES

Small gains

ACCOUNT DAYS: Dealings began December 12. Dealings end today. Settlement day January 9.
 Forward bargains are permitted on two previous business days.

Prices recorded are at market close. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Where one price is quoted, it is a middle price. Changes, yields and price earnings ratios are based on middle prices. (aa) denotes Alpha Stocks. (VOLUMES: PAGE 16).

Portfolio
PLUS
Accumulator

From your Portfolio card check your eight share price movements on this page only. Add these prices to your running total for the week and check this against the weekly dividend figure on this page. If it matches or exceeds this figure, you have won outright or a share of the total weekly or accumulator prize money stated. If you win, follow the claim procedure on the back of your card. You must always have your card available when claiming. Game rules appear on the back of your card.

No.	Company	Group	Gain or Loss
1	BOC (aa)	Industrial A-D	
2	Blue Arrow (aa)	Industrial A-D	
3	Boccon & Hawkes	Leisure	
4	Swire Pacific 'W'	Industrial S-Z	
5	Bibby (T)	Industrial S-Z	
6	Tex Hedges	Industrial S-Z	
7	Church	Drugs/Stores	
8	Traveller Hse (aa)	Industrial S-Z	
9	Richard (Leica)	Industrial L-R	
10	Amsted (aa)	Electricals	
11	Sycamore	Industrial S-Z	
12	Broken Hill	Industrial A-D	
13	Roth & Tompkins	Property	
14	CH Ltd	Industrial A-D	
15	Lon Int	Industrial L-R	
16	Redgrave	Industrial A-D	
17	AAF Inv	Industrial A-D	
18	Coventry	Industrial A-D	
19	Coventry Pops	Industrial A-D	
20	Tollie	Industrial S-Z	
21	TI	Industrial S-Z	
22	Comptel	Building/Roads	
23	Rank Org (aa)	Industrial L-R	
24	Son Alliance (aa)	Insurance	
25	Benson PLC (aa)	Industrial A-D	
26	Lon Shop	Property	
27	Moon Leisure	Leisure	
28	Gleeson (MD)	Building/Roads	
29	The Rank	Drugs/Stores	
30	Lon & Son	Industrial L-R	
31	Cookson (aa)	Industrial A-D	
32	Stobhouse (aa)	Drugs/Stores	
33	Widder	Insurance	
34	Westland	Motors/Aircraft	
35	Wicks	Drugs/Stores	
36	Noble & Land	Industrial L-R	
37	BSS Group	Industrial A-D	
38	Dever	Industrial A-D	
39	Int Thomson	Newspapers/Pub	
40	Coleridge	Industrial A-D	
41	Crosby James	Building/Roads	
42	Martling	Industrial L-R	
43	ASW	Industrial A-D	
44	Chad Co	Property	

Please take into account any minus signs

Weekly Dividend						
Please make a note of your daily totals for the weekly dividend of £2,000 in today's newspaper.						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Week Total

BRITISH FUNDS

1988	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
SHORTS (Under Five Years)							
1	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
2	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
3	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
4	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
5	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
6	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
7	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
8	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
9	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
10	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
11	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
12	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
13	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
14	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
15	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
16	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
17	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
18	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
19	100	95
20	100	95
21	100	95
22	100	95
23	100	95
24	100	95
25	100	95
26	100	95
27	100	95
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29	100	95
30	100	95
31	100	95
32	100	95
33	100	95
34	100	95
35	100	95
36	100	95
37	100	95
38	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
39	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
40	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
41	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
42	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
43	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
44	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
45	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
46	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
47	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
48	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
49	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
50	100	95	...	...	...	...	...

1988	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
FIVE TO FIFTEEN YEARS							
1	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
2	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
3	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
4	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
5	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
6	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
7	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
8	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
9	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
10	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
11	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
12	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
13	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
14	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
15	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
16	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
17	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
18	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
19	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
20	100	95
21	100	95
22	100	95
23	100	95
24	100	95
25	100	95
26	100	95
27	100	95
28	100	95
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35	100	95
36	100	95
37	100	95
38	100	95
39	100	95
40	100	95
41	100	95
42	100	95
43	100	95
44	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
45	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
46	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
47	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
48	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
49	100	95	...	...	...	...	...
50	100	95	...	...	...	...	...

1988	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
OVER FIFTEEN YEARS							
1	100	95
2	100	95
3	100	95
4	100	95
5	100	95
6	100	95
7	100	95
8	100	95
9	100	95
10	100	95
11	100	95
12	100	95
13	100	95
14	100	95
15	100	95
16	100	95
17	100	95
18	100	95
19	100	95
20	100	95
21	100	95
22	100	95
23	100	95
24	100	95
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43	100	95
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47	100	95
48	100	95
49	100	95
50	100	95

BANKS, DISCOUNT HP							
1988	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E	
UNDATED							
1	100	Abn-Amro	220	•	•	•	
2	100	Anglo-Iranian	•	•	•	•	
3	100	Anglo-Norfolk	•	•	•	•	
4	100	Anglo-Siam	225	•	•	•	
5	100	Anglo-Togo	•	•	•	•	
6	100	Bank of Africa	•	•	•	•	
7	100	Bank of America	200	•	•	•	
8	100	Bank of China	•	•	•	•	
9	100	Bank of India	•	•	•	•	
10	100	Bank of Japan	•	•	•	•	
11	100	Bank of London	•	•	•	•	
12	100	Bank of Montreal	•	•	•	•	
13	100	Bank of New York	•	•	•	•	
14	100	Bank of Paris	•	•	•	•	
15	100	Bank of Rome	•	•	•	•	
16	100	Bank of Spain	•	•	•	•	
17	100	Bank of Sweden	•	•	•	•	
18	100	Bank of Switzerland	•	•	•	•	
19	100	Bank of Tokyo	•	•	•	•	
20	100	Bank of Union	•	•	•	•	
21	100	Bank of West	•	•	•	•	
22	100	Bank of World	•	•	•	•	
23	100	Bank of Yugoslavia	•	•	•	•	
24	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
25	100	Bank of Zimbabwe	•	•	•	•	
26	100	Bank of Zambia	•	•	•	•	
27	100	Bank of Zanzibar	•	•	•	•	
28	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
29	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
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91	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
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93	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
94	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
95	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
96	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
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98	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
99	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	
100	100	Bank of Zaire	•	•	•	•	

Sharp-eyed investors spot silver linings



George Davies: vexed Next

Stock market traders hoping for a decent recovery last year were disappointed. The FT SE-100 index remained stuck in a narrow band - from 1,694 to 1,878 - and seldom looked like holding the high ground. But this did not mean there were no opportunities for investors with a sharp eye.

The best performing shares of the year were again special situations - where entrepreneurs snapped up shell companies as a vehicle for future expansion.

But it was also a year when

tried and trusted favourites, such as Mr George Davies's Next, saw their share price collapse because of trading difficulties and boardroom differences.

Worries over the future of high street spending cast a damper over the whole retail sector.

But some parts of the economy continued to encourage investment support. Some, such as Sir Richard Attenborough's Capital Radio, prospered because of booming advertising revenues.



Sir Richard: capital gains

Jute firm weaves its way to top performing share

By Cliff Fetham

After 105 years, the little-known Jute Factory, founded in 1883 by Dundee jute merchants, and considered permanently confined to the backwaters of the stock market, has romped into the charts as the best performing share of 1988.

Starting the year at just 80p, the shares were suspended in May because the company failed to pay its listing fees. But they soared on news that Mr Reg Brealey, the entrepreneur, had picked up 29 per cent of the shares and was planning a reorganization of the group. They now change hands at 515p.

Noble Rareton, which used to be called Gnome Photographic, a manufacturer of overhead projectors, took off when the younger sister of Mr Aziz Nadir, the Polly Peck chairman, took over. Investors who remembered how Polly Peck rocketed from a few pence to £35 in the three years to 1983 are obviously hoping that the family has not lost its magic touch.

According to Datastream, which compiled the list for *The Times*, the best performer among the larger company stocks was Crown Communications Group, the result of a merger between Crown TV and Chalford Communications, the commercial radio group with a stake in LBC, the London news station. The whole broadcasting sector has enjoyed a buoyant year as plans for deregulation open up exciting growth prospects.

Capital Radio, Britain's largest independent radio contractor, saw its share price tipped up from 161p to 465p on booming advertising rev-

WINNERS AND LOSERS 1988

Under £25m	% rise	Price
Thagur Jute	544	515p
Noble Rareton	273	143p
ML Labs	244	375p
Scottish Ice Rink	234	84p
Radio City	225	320p
Piccadilly Radio	222	160p
AF Bulgin	191	102p
Ass Energy Services	184	58p
Chapetown Race	163	210.50
Radio Clyde	153	238p
Over £25m	% rise	Price
Crown Communications	381	207p
Whitbread "B"	225	980p
Capital Radio	188	465p
Invergordon Dist	180	408p
Cityvision	130	99p
Card Group	127	282p
Explura Holdings	126	44p
Rowlinson Secs	123	207p
Massall-Glen	120	E1.05
Greenall Whitley	119	230p
Under £25m	% fall	Price
London & Overseas Freighters	94	0.25p
Parrish	81	53p
Unigroup	73	49p
Intac	71	5p
BOM Holdings	71	250p
Memocon Int	67	12p
Pension Int	67	350p
NW Computers	64	84p
Amperco Energy	63	12p
Far East Resources	62	38p
Over £25m	% fall	Price
Mia Fields	76	33p
Int City Holdings	60	61p
Greenwich Resources	60	91p
Butte Mining	57	49p
Acas & Hutch	56	192p
Vivat Holdings	54	77p
Next	53	135p
Acis Group	49	41p
Elam	49	143p
Kanyon Secs	48	139p

enue. Capital, according to analysts, is expected to bid for a national radio franchise.

Miss World Group, where the ambitious Mr Owen Oyston and his Red Rose Radio group conducted a reverse takeover, was just outside the top 10 but its shares more than doubled to 428p as it seeks opportunities for using the Miss World

name on an increasing range of merchandise.

The brewing sector enjoyed strong support spurred by the likes of Mr John Elliott, the head of Elders DXL, taking a number of predatory stakes in British brewers. He finally bid for Scottish & Newcastle Breweries. One of the best performers in the sector was Greenall Whitley, which is

based in the North-west and which observers believe is being stalked by a large brewer.

But 1988 also had its fair share of casualties, in particular the fall from grace of a number of market favourites.

Mrs Fields, the American cookies company arrived on the United Securities Market two years ago in a fanfare of publicity, but it has been downhill ever since.

The company has been dogged by misfortune and the shares, sold to London investors at 140p, have now slipped to 33p. Mr Randy Fields, the chairman, arrived in London gruff-faced to explain how the company had opened up more than 120 stores in the US which, it has since discovered, were really in the wrong place and had to be closed. On top of that, a heatwave in America put customers off buying cookies. Investors are still nourishing the thoughts of a bid for the company to put them out of their misery.

Few investors would have predicted the dramatic collapse of Next shares, now ignominiously listed among the ten worst performing shares of the year. From 288p in January, the shares have crashed to 135p. The warning of a significant drop in profits eventually led to the departure of Mr George Davies, the company's head and mentor. Rising interest rates have cast a cloud over the future of high street trading.

At the end of the day, there will be very few people in the City who will mourn the passing of 1988. A year, it will be recalled, when Big Bang exploded in the face of hundreds of workers in the securities industry who enter 1989 looking for a new job.

A lesson in regulation when Rico rides into Wall Street

In New York, Drexel Burnham Lambert, America's fifth largest investment house, agreed to plead guilty to six fraud charges brought by the US Government and to pay staggering - but staggered - penalties and fines of \$650 million (£361.31 million).

The move presents a revealing contrast in the methods of the United States with those of Britain to regulate their securities industries - a critical and sensitive area for Mrs Thatcher, bearing in mind the Guinness saga and the Barlow Clowes affair.

Drexel made the biggest single contribution to the latest transformation of corporate America by creating a \$100 billion market in high-yielding, high-risk securities. These "junk bonds" have financed a new breed of entrepreneur in takeover bids on a previously unimagined scale. The key figure in Drexel's remarkable progress and its huge profits during the 1980s is Mr Michael Milken, head of its junk bond operations, who played no part in the plea bargaining that has led to Drexel's pleading guilty.

Criminal investigations have been led with impressive zeal by Mr Rudolph Giuliani, Federal prosecutor for the southern district of New York, which includes Wall Street. But he would be the first to acknowledge the valuable supporting roles of Mr Ivan Boesky, a former Drexel insider who pleaded guilty in November 1986 to insider dealing - with information supplied by Mr Dennis Levine of Drexel - turned state evidence, paid \$100 million in fines and was sent to prison for three years. Mr Levine by the way, who was alleged to have made \$12.6 million from insider dealing (the



KENNETH FLEET

only certain way of making money on the stock market), was fined \$362,000 and given a two-year sentence.

The Manhattan attorney would also testify to the value of America's Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, and in particular to the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) section. The words eloquently convey their purpose - to enable government prosecutors to bring mobsters to court before their profits have been laundered or successfully concealed behind legitimate corporate fronts. To prevent their disappearance assets of a "corrupt organization" can be frozen before a trial.

However, the Rico is clearly too useful a weapon to be used only against the mafia and has been found to be very effective against white collar suspects. Princeton/Newport, a small investment firm charged under the Rico section, filed for bankruptcy this month. In November, with the approval of the Department of Justice, Giuliani had Drexel in his Rico sights. Unless Drexel agreed to plead guilty and pay a fine he would ask the court to freeze Drexel assets. He might not have succeeded but he was undoubtedly successful in concentrating the minds of a majority of Drexel's 22-member board who decided it was not worth the risk.

As the *Wall Street Journal* reported: "The haunting spectre of Rico charges against Drexel made many of the firm's officials desperate to settle. Besides the threat to the officials' personal fortunes, the financial uncertainty created by such a charge could cause banks to cut Drexel off from funds (\$30 billion short term) it must borrow to finance its operations. Plus a mounting toll of clients (an estimated \$1.5 billion in lost revenue since investigations began) and the active presence of headquarters among the firm's more able people."

To Mr Fred Joseph, the chief executive, anything must have seemed preferable to a long and debilitating trial on broad charges of racketeering and corruption.

But the story of Wall Street's biggest ever securities fraud case does not end there. Drexel's agreement with Mr Giuliani does not give immunity to any individuals and it does not include any provision for Mr Milken, who had no part in the plea bargaining. Furthermore the agreement comes into effect only if the Securities and Exchange Commission accepts that it covers the SEC's civil case against the firm.

In September the SEC accused Drexel, Mr Milken and others with insider trading, stock market manipulation and other breaches of federal securities law. If, by January 15, Drexel has persuaded the SEC to agree that enough is enough, it then has to face the certainty of court actions by investors alleging that the firm's behaviour has financially harmed them. Part of the agreed \$361 million fines and penalties is earmarked as a compensation fund. It is a stiff price to pay for survival but survival is usually preferable to death.

NatWest faces testing time with DTI

We see the opposite end of the spectrum in National Westminster's role in the 1987 acquisition by Blue Arrow of Manpower, the US employment agency group. The Department of Trade, having made some preliminary inquiries in February this year, has finally appointed its own inspectors under section 432 of the Companies Act which gives them power to take evidence under oath and to seize documents.

On the face of it, had the DTI not been satisfied with the rigor of NatWest's investigation of itself, it was a long time making up its mind (it claims to have done so in October but spent two months in finding the right inspectors) to have an investigation of its own. More material may have come to light which left the DTI no option but to act.

The facts that are publicly known are straightforward. In September 1987 County NatWest Securities, NatWest's

merchant banking subsidiary, arranged an £837 million rights issue to finance the takeover of Manpower by Blue Arrow, County's client. The 51 per cent of the issue not taken up by shareholders was, according to County and Phillips & Drew, the brokers, successfully placed. This was not strictly true. County itself had to take up 4.9 per cent and its market-making subsidiary took another 4.6 per cent. Stakes over 5 per cent have to be disclosed.

In the October crash Blue Arrow shares were almost halved, County revealed it had 9.5 per cent, transferred the 4.6 per cent from the market-makers to itself and provided £49 million against a loss on the shares.

At this stage everything seemed to turn on whether County was right in not disclosing immediately the size of its stake. It argued that section 209 of the Companies Act permitted it not to reveal the market-makers' 4.6 per cent stake as it was held for the purpose of market making.

Had County counted in Blue Arrow shares bought for its own discretionary clients, it would have been above the 5 per cent disclosure limit without the market-makers' 4.6 per cent. This mistake apart, Sir Philip's (unpublished) report exonerated County. Whether he was right remains to be seen.

Meanwhile the course events have taken are another blow to NatWest's merchant bank, already reeling from losses in its securities operation, defections, low morale and, dare I say it, a strategy that does not seem to permeate as far as the people employed to carry it out.

The DTI investigation is broad in scope and the questions the inspectors are bound to ask about matters like false markets involve the criminal law in ways not dissimilar from another well-known cause celebre.

Happy Christmas. It may all be resolved in the New Year.

UNIT-LINKED INSURANCE INVESTMENTS

Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd	Bid Offer chng Ytd
ACTUAL LIFE INSURANCE 401, St John Street, London EC4M 4AE 01-487 1044	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62	12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62 12.18 12.80 +0.62

FAMILY MONEY

Edited by Vivien Goldsmith

Portfolio
PLUS
Accumulator

For readers who may have missed a copy of *The Times* this week, we repeat below the week's *Portfolio* price changes (today's are on page 14).

Day	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	+4	+3	+4	+4	+4	
2	+5	+4	+6	+2	+3	
3	+8	+5	+4	+2	+5	
4	+7	+5	+6	+3	+2	
5	+3	+4	+4	+4	+3	
6	+6	+5	+6	+4	+2	
7	+4	+4	+6	+1	+2	
8	+7	+5	+3	+2	+7	
9	+3	+5	+5	+3	+2	
10	+4	+3	+3	+3	+5	
11	+7	+4	+3	+3	+5	
12	+3	+2	+4	+5	+5	
13	+7	+4	+4	+2	+1	
14	+6	+5	+3	+2	+5	
15	+3	+5	+5	+1	+3	
16	+6	+4	+6	+2	+3	
17	+3	+4	+5	+3	+4	
18	+6	+5	+3	+3	+5	
19	+7	+4	+4	+1	+5	
20	+5	+6	+8	+1	+4	
21	+6	+3	+3	+3	+3	
22	+5	+6	+4	+3	+2	
23	+5	+3	+7	+2	+5	
24	+5	+3	+4	+5	+3	
25	+6	+5	+6	+2	+3	
26	+7	+4	+3	+1	+5	
27	+4	+4	+5	+4	+5	
28	+3	+3	+5	+3	+2	
29	+7	+4	+4	+2	+5	
30	+6	+6	+6	+4	+1	
31	+4	+4	+5	+2	+4	
32	+6	+4	+3	+1	+4	
33	+7	+5	+4	+3	+2	
34	+5	+6	+4	+4	+3	
35	+4	+3	+6	+2	+4	
36	+6	+5	+3	+3	+7	
37	+6	+5	+5	+2	+1	
38	+4	+3	+6	+2	+2	
39	+4	+2	+3	+4	+4	
40	+8	+4	+5	+4	+2	
41	+3	+2	+5	+3	+3	
42	+4	+3	+6	+1	+2	
43	+6	+7	+4	+2	+3	
44	+7	+6	+2	+1	+3	

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LONDON, E1 9DD.

Reprieve for borrowers on annual plans

By Vivien Goldsmith

Higher monthly mortgage repayments have been postponed for a month until February in a move which could make all the difference for the 40 per cent of borrowers on annually set mortgage plans.

The Nationwide Anglia, the third largest building society, will have to set the annual rate in the middle of January in order to get the new payments flowing from February 1.

Pressure will be on Nationwide to set a new rate for all customers at the same time so the 40 per cent on annual review — nearly 400,000 borrowers — can be put on that rate. But the society may want to delay setting a rate until later in January and will set an arbitrary rate for those on annual review to reflect the coming further rise without actually matching it.

The Halifax has 70 per cent of its 1.6 million borrowers on annual review. It said it is in no hurry to announce a new rate before the new year. Those on annual review start paying the new rate in April. The outstanding debt is worked out on January 31 and borrowers receive notice of their new payments during February.

The new rates — probably 13.5 per cent if the current economic climate persists — are almost certain to be in force by February.

Those on annual review with the Nationwide Anglia have been paying 10.3 per cent, the rate prevailing at the beginning of the year. The rate fell to 9.75 per cent on May 1, rose on August 1 to 11.5 per cent and to 12.75 per cent on October 1.

The new rate is likely to mean a rise of more than three percentage points for bor-

rowers on annual review. The monthly payments on a £60,000 repayment mortgage at 10.3 per cent are £499.22, while the payments at 13.5 per cent are £620.35 — a rise of £121.13 or nearly 25 per cent. Interest payments on a £60,000 endowment mortgage rise from £450.63 at 10.3 per cent to £590.63 at 13.5 per cent — a rise of £140 more than 30 per cent.

The Newcastle Building Society defended its once-a-year change system by saying there have been 19 rate changes since its scheme was introduced in 1982 — nine up and 10 down. The effect of these changes in those seven years has been to increase the capital due to be repaid on a £10,000 mortgage (the average in 1982) by £30 gross or £21 net.

"This surely invalidates completely any argument about such a system being to the detriment of the borrower. It enables sensible budgeting for a full year."

Other societies such as the Abbey National and Alliance & Leicester are keeping the situation under review. "We might not have to make any changes at all," said an optimistic spokesman for Abbey.

The TSB has put its rates up to 14 per cent for endowment mortgages and 14.2 per cent for repayment mortgages from January.

Both societies have put up savers' rates. The Alliance & Leicester's top rate on its four months' notice account is now 10.25 per cent on balances over £25,000, an increase of 0.65 percentage points while the Gold Plus instant access account top rate for £25,000 and over moves to 9.25 per cent.

Speed Santa safely through the snow

GEO MELLOR

24 Gold calling should be second nature, but you make a pitch at an insurance broker, insisting he needs more life cover. He complains to LAUTRO that you have broken cold calling rules by forcing your way into the house at midnight. Go back three squares.

23 Measleycard launches a new charity based affinity card, and recognises your sponsorship potential. They pay you £5 for each new card taken out, and one per cent of the turnover. Go straight to the end.

22 Recognise that in the tough world of the late eighties, you will have to combine business with goodness. Enrol in a direct sales force and miss a turn as you learn how to sell pension plans to the adults, while giving toys to the children.

21 Leave gold coins you picked up in the Channel Islands to please a developer's teenage daughter. Move back two squares for being too clever by half. You only avoid VAT if you buy and keep the coins in the Channel Islands.

20 Customs and Excise seize you and your sleigh insisting you have brought everything you have brought in and pay VAT on it. Argue you are exempt as an overseas charity and throw a six to escape.

19 Narrowly miss a light aircraft as you start to glide in at house-top level — but all is well. The pilot assumes he's hallucinating and says nothing to anyone.

18 Eat your egg sandwiches half way through the tour, realising that the egg seemed suspiciously soft as you swallowed it. Go into NHS isolation hospital — you could not afford the private insurance subscriptions this year — for Salmonella tests and only emerge on throwing a six.

17 Helpfully provide deeds of covenant forms from last year for grandparents across Britain, to remind them to be generous too. Go back one square: the tax concessions on deeds of covenant disappeared in this year's Budget.

16 Leave a seven year National Savings Certificate with tax free proceeds at Number 17, and then remember Little Fred doesn't pay tax. Sue your professional adviser under the best advice rule — he suggested the move — and miss a turn.

15 You tell a child that if he wants to make his fortune, he must start saving now. Miss a turn for giving unauthorised financial advice.

14 The tax inspector finally decides that your cloak and boots are wholly and exclusively used in the course of your work. Move forward three spaces to claim tax relief on any UK earnings you may have.

13 Leave investments in Luxembourg based umbrella funds to City investment analysts, who have still got a job. Move forward six squares, as they switch from fund to fund, without any capital gains tax worries as long as they can find any gains in the first place.

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1

START

DESIGNED BY TOM TICKELL

NEW HIGHER RATES FROM JANUARY 3RD

Enjoy a Prosperous New Year with Cheltenham Gold

Invest in Cheltenham Gold and you'll be sure of a very prosperous New Year. Our new higher rates make Cheltenham Gold an exceptional investment opportunity and when you compare these 'no strings' rates with other major building societies you'll see just how exceptional.

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9.50% NET*
ON £25,000 OR MORE

9.25% NET*
ON £5,000 OR MORE

8.50% NET*
ON £1,000 OR MORE
6% NET ON £1 OR MORE

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CHIEF OFFICE: CHELTENHAM HOUSE, CLARENCE STREET, CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL50 3JR. TELEPHONE: (0242) 36161.
Branches throughout the UK. See Yellow Pages. Member of the Building Societies Association. Assets exceed £5,000 million.

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*Compound Annual Rate.

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To: Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society, PO Box 124, FREEPOST, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 1BR.

1/We enclose £..... to open a Gold By Post Account (Minimum £500 Maximum £1 million).

1/We enclose £..... to open a Gold Monthly Interest Account By Post (Minimum £5,000 Maximum £1 million)

☐ Please send more details

BLOCK CAPITALS

Full Name(s) Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address

Postcode

Tel

GXT1

Father Christmas, the classic high net worth individual, is self-employed and domiciled overseas for tax reasons. But he has a real sense of community giving all the same. Completing the long journey each Christmas Eve is never easy, but

even more so this year, as, unfortunately, money problems keep cropping up and wiping the "ho ho ho" from his bearded lips. So help Santa complete his festive trek as quickly as possible — take a dice, and put yourself in his position...

Cheshunt first to defy ombudsman's orders



Sitting pretty now: Peter and Julia Morgan and daughter Kiri after changing their mortgage

A building society has defied Mr Stephen Edell, the Building Society Ombudsman, for the first time, after he ordered it to waive a mortgage redemption charge.

The Cheshunt Building Society denied that charging the penalty was unfair treatment and refused to comply. But the tale had a happy ending for Mr Peter Morgan and his wife Julia — for despite the ruling they redeemed their £22,000 mortgage with the Cheshunt by using their right to repay it without penalty when mortgage rates rise.

The problems began in 1987 when Mr Morgan, a local government officer, realised that he could find a cheaper mortgage elsewhere, and decided he wanted to move the mortgage on his home in Saffron Walden, Essex.

But Rule 19 of the society says that when a mortgage is repaid within the first five years, a payment has to be made of three months' interest. In Mr and Mrs Morgan's case this amounted to £350.

"I did not want to pay the forfeit," said Mr Morgan. "It had not been pointed out to me that I would have to do this. It was buried in the rules. It was very obscure."

There were 58 rules at the time the Morgans signed their deeds. Mr Alan Reece, the chief executive of the Cheshunt Building Society, said: "The society tells solicitors to point out any significant details in the rules and we would

not have expected them to have signed if they were not happy with them."

Mr Morgan now says: "The problem was I was naive enough to believe they were offering me the best deal when I took out the mortgage. I feel I was definitely misled."

Mr Edell was initially minded to order the Cheshunt to lower the interest rate as an alternative to waiving the penalty.

But he was persuaded by the building society that this was not fair and eventually ordered the society to release Mr Morgan from his mortgage without a penalty.

This it refused to do on the grounds that the power to levy a redemption charge within the first five years was set out in the rules, and Mr and Mrs Morgan were bound by the rules.

The society also maintains that it would be "unfair to other borrowers" if an exception was made in this case.

"The policy is well established and well defined and has been applied consistently," said Mr Reece.

But there are circumstances when the penalty is not levied by the Cheshunt, including the death of the borrower, cases of hardship and when the mortgage rate is increased.

As the dispute between the building society and the Morgans dragged on, the mortgage rate climbed, and on November 2 this year, they redeemed the mortgage without paying a penalty.

Mr Edell is not opposed to

V.G.

Constant flow of
phone threats

[illegible]

The prices in this section refer to Thursday's trading

● Ex dividend. ● Cum dividend. Is Cum stock split. ● Ex stock split. Is Cum all (any two or more of above). ● Ex all (any two or more of above). Dealing or valuation days: (1) Monday. (2) Tuesday. (3) Wednesday. (4) Thursday. (5) Friday.

UNLISTED SECURITIES

[illegible]

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

Sterling index compared with 1975 was up at 77.4 (day's range 77.4-77.5).

Market rates for December 23				OTHER STEELING RATES	
Base	Close	1 month	3 month		
				Argentina austral	28.1880-28.3478
				Australia dollar	2.1010-2.1158

New York	1.7980-1.8025	1.7985-1.8025	61%-62%	Bahrain direct	0.6790-0.6805	
Moscow	2.1438-2.1612	2.1519-2.1612	64%-67%	Saudi crude	1.4814-1.286-47	
Amsterdam	3.8078-3.8158	3.8007-3.8151	2%-3%	U.S. Gulf	1.4780-1.4825	
London	1.8222-1.8252	1.8222-1.8252	2%-3%	U.S. West	1.4780-1.4825	
Copenhagen	12.3232-12.3252	12.3242-12.3252	1%-2%	14%-15%	Hong Kong dollar	7.4650-7.4661
Dublin	1.1940-1.1947	1.1935-1.1947	61%-62%	14%-15%	Malay rupiah	28.93-27.13
Frankfurt	1.1932-1.1935	1.1932-1.1935	61%-62%	14%-15%	Indonesia KR	1.4780-1.4825
Oslo	293.23-294.33	293.37-294.33	14%-25%	11-1044%	Malaysia ringgit	4.3613-4.3704
Stockholm	1.1932-1.1935	1.1932-1.1935	61%-62%	14%-25%	Mexico peso	2.4050-1.450
Vienna	294.30-294.60	294.30-294.60	3%-4%	14%-25%	Philippine dollar	2.4050-1.450
Oso	11.7385-11.8301	11.8161-11.8402	1%-1%	14%-25%	Saudi Arabian riyal	5.7475-5.8775
Paris	1.1932-1.1935	1.1932-1.1935	61%-62%	11%-12%	Singapore dollar	1.4780-1.4825
Stuttgart	11.0161-11.0591	11.0273-11.0591	1%-1%	4%-5%	S Africa rand (cont)	4.3533-4.3526
Tokyo	225.23-225.55	225.33-225.55	1%-1%	4%-5%	S Africa rand (cont)	4.3533-4.3526
Zurich	1.1932-1.1935	1.1932-1.1935	61%-62%	10%-12%	U.S. dollar	1.0750-1.0755
	2.6932-2.7053	2.6931-2.7053	8-15%	51%-61%		

*London Bank, Bahrain direct by
 Saudi and Malaysia Bank, NOK by

DOLLAR SPOT RATES		
Denmark	5.9600-5.9700	100

Taiwan	1.9430-1.9440	W Germany	1.7765-1.7780	Belgium (Com)	73.05-73.35
Singapore	2.0000-2.0010	Switzerland	1.6970-1.6980	France	78.9000-7.9010
Malaysia	2.7030-2.7035	Netherlands	2.8035-2.8050	Hong Kong	7.8000-7.8050
Australia	1.1682-1.1750	Denmark	6.0500-6.0505	Portugal	146.50-147.00
Canada	1.1950-1.1980	France	1.1950-1.1980	Spain	114.00-114.20
Sweden	5.1270-5.1272	Japan	124.60-124.90	Australia	12.47-12.48
Norway	5.5550-5.5590				

Rates supplied by Barclays Bank HOFEX and Ecolit.

MONEY MARKETS

[illegible]

Close: \$417.50-418.00

[illegible]

	Close	Vol	Open	High	Low	Close	Vol
100 Tennessee Bond	100.00	100	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100

[illegible]

COMMODITIES

[illegible]

AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION
 Market prices at ...

[illegible]

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

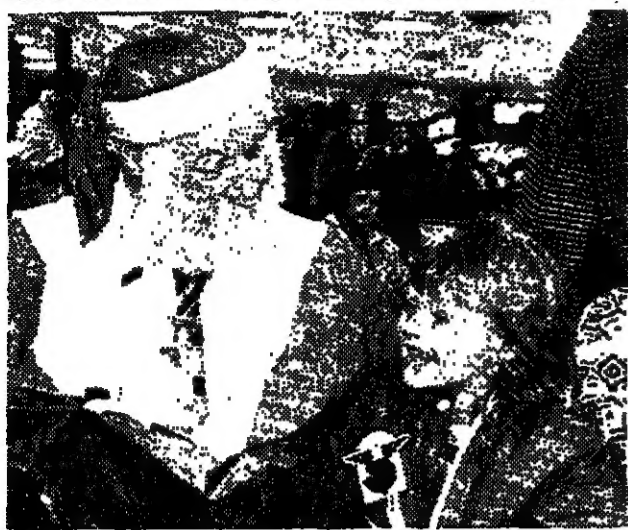
[illegible]

Escaping from a warm Christmas

PAUL LOWE



A crowded Heathrow Airport last night held a surprise for Linda Ellis, aged five, below, who met Father Christmas while she was waiting for her flight.



Continued from page 1
 children will be decorated with Christmas trees and tinsel, and airline staff will wear fancy dress or sing carols.
 Sir Bryan Nicholson, chairman of the Post Office, announced yesterday that the Royal Mail had successfully cleared the decks of 1.5 billion letters and cards, including 500,000 to Father Christmas at the Royal Mail's specially created address in "Reindeerland". They had also delivered 60 million parcels, beating last year's record.
 Supermarkets are convinced that they are going to break all records today despite the exodus of so many customers to destinations abroad. But

shops were yesterday accused of staging "a massive Christmas rip-off" and raking in "scandalously high profits" by Mr Barry Sheerman, the Opposition front-bench spokesman on home affairs. He wrote to three Cabinet ministers — the Home Secretary, Mr Douglas Hurd, the Trade and Industry Secretary, Lord Young, and the Transport Secretary, Mr Paul Channon, demanding an inquiry into the exploitation of Christmas shoppers.
 "In Britain the profit margin is 5 per cent to 7 per cent," Mr Sheerman claimed, "whereas in America and many other countries it is only 1 per cent."

The John Lewis Partnership reported yesterday that customers had spent a record amount of nearly £21 million at its Waitrose branches in the week to December 17.
 Mr Sheerman also accused brewers of over-charging for non-alcoholic drinks. Nonetheless brewers and publicans confirmed that sales of low alcohol and non-alcoholic beers and wines had boomed this Christmas, showing greater growth than any other sector.
 Mr Robert Cryer, Labour MP for Bradford South, urged the Government to "bring a little Christmas cheer to the needy" by introducing cut-price television licences.

Police link wanted IRA men to Inglis Barracks explosion

By Stewart Tisdler, Andrew Morgan and Ruth Gledhill

Scotland Yard anti-terrorist detectives hunting two IRA men who fled a south London bomb factory have linked the fugitives with the bombing of Inglis Barracks, Mill Hill, in which a serviceman died.
 The bomb was left inside a barrack block at the main living quarters of the Forces' postal services and exploded early in the morning last August. Nine soldiers were injured in the blast, the first successful IRA attack since the 1984 Brighton bombing.
 Yesterday, as the search for the two men continued, detectives remained convinced they had not escaped from the mainland.
 A man and a woman, thought to be linked to Sinn Féin, were held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act

yesterday and were last night still being questioned at Paddington Green police station, west London, for clues to the fugitives' whereabouts.
 After the barracks bombing, there was speculation that the bombers were part of a Continental unit who had slipped in and then out of Britain. Yard sources now believe the two missing men could be part of that unit and have returned in the past two months.
 The fugitives could have been linked to the barracks bombing by finds in the Clapham flat; the bomb at Mill Hill may have been matched with some of the material in the flat, thought to have contained more than 100 lb of Semtex explosives and six and nine-day timers.
 The owner of the small,

Growing doubts over 747 bombing theory

Continued from page 1

warning. Mr Portillo confirmed that the department received the warning from the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) on December 9. It had asked the security services to weigh up the information. "We were satisfied, having assessed it, that the enhanced security for American planes was satisfactory and appropriate."
 For many years, there has been extra security measures for American airlines in Britain.
 Asked why the public was not told he said: "This was confidential and classified American intelligence information and we felt we did not have a right to divulge it." He said that, if all the warnings that were received were to the public without any examination, they would lose their impact. Earlier on

BBC radio, Mr Channon said that such warnings occurred all the time.
 He declared: "Each one is taken very seriously and each one has to be evaluated and you have to decide what, if any, extra measures have to be taken as a result. This is happening all the time."
 Mr Channon faced an angry attack from Mr Prescott yesterday for not disclosing in the Commons on Thursday that a warning had been received.
 The Labour spokesman said: "You do trust ministers to tell everything on these occasions. That did not happen." But the department said that, before the statement was made, it had been felt inappropriate to single out this warning, one of many constantly made to the Government, before it had had the opportunity to communicate with the FAA.



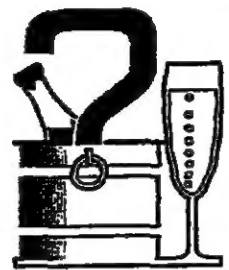
BOXING DAY

On Monday *The Times* will be the only quality paper to be published

First Light

● *First Light*, Peter Ackroyd's latest novel, is set in Dorset, where a remarkable star is being studied, and a strange burial mound excavated.

On page 22 today the author tells the story behind the book. Read *First Light* in six extracts in *The Times* next week, starting on Monday.



● Charades: Starting on Boxing Day, a sparkling (but simple) competition to test your knowledge of imaginary characters, with five crates of champagne to be won.
 ● Bernard Levin: on power, arrogance and corruption at home and abroad.

NEXT WEEK

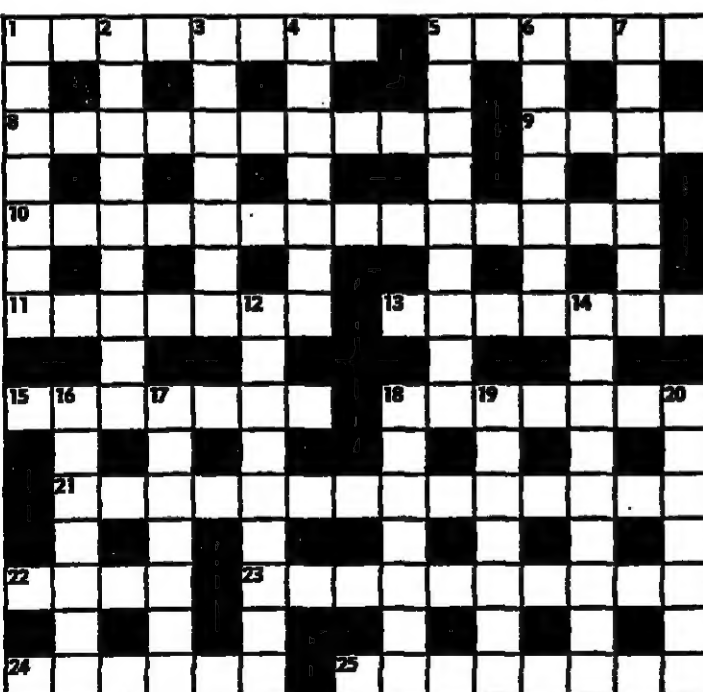


What do Joan Collins, Frank Carlucci, Derek Jameson and Father Christmas have in common? All come under junior scrutiny in *Early Times*, a special 12-page issue of the children's newspaper free with *The Times* on Tuesday. In the same issue, teachers are taken to task by their pupils; and the pantomimes are reviewed by those who really know them...

Plus ● A far, far better thing? A series to mark the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.
 ● Hanson's next step: In an exclusive interview, Lord Hanson talks to *The Times* about his plans.

To ensure your Boxing Day copy of *The Times*, place an order with your newsagent today.

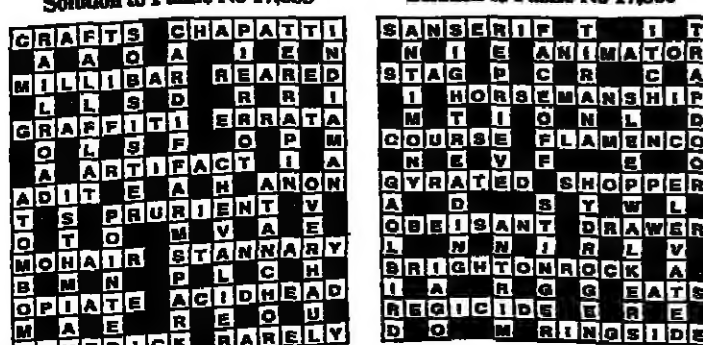
THE TIMES CROSSWORD PUZZLE NO 17,861



- ACROSS**
- Untrustworthy, like a mule? (8).
 - American author's cloak (6).
 - Pull right reserves back before battle (10).
 - Ramble passed through a narrow passage (4).
 - Escape with instrument in black box (6,8).
 - Discards clubs, say, to win South's confidence (7).
 - Islander's king takes queen, perhaps (7).
 - Become attached, as Bill is to island (7).
 - Eat together in ship, maybe, in a port (7).
 - For example, two to one it's a logical issue (8,6).
 - For instance, Meredith, Orwell and French novelist (6,4).
 - Poet that initially might be alternative to Graves? (6).
 - Leader of Greek enemy 'ad destroyed Trojan youth (8).
- DOWN**
- Having teachers give boy the rod (7).
 - In Italian city, being non-U so essential (9).
 - Trepasser in Cook's vessel (7).
 - Gives back profit (7).
 - Priest needing help, we hear, in gun attack (9).
 - Endlessly display bovine type — Irish bull, perhaps? (7).
 - Restaurant's state when worker turned up outside (7).
 - Considered for some time, though tempted (9).
 - Rope leading pairs together (9).
 - No ill-feeling with this priest everyone follows (4-3).
 - Reptile's a particularly fine specimen (7).
 - Complaint as girl's seen embracing boy (7).
 - Confuse and badly upset — fatally? Not at all (7).
 - Shorten a part of violin composition (7).

Solution to Puzzle No 17,855

Solution to Puzzle No 17,860



WORD-WATCHING

A daily safari through the language jungle. Which of the possible definitions is correct?

By Philip Howard

- PEIRASTIC**
 a. A resinous glue
 b. Experimental
 c. Freebooting, brigandage
- BAM**
 a. To look
 b. A tapered bun
 c. Military unit of Thailand
- SINGULT**
 a. A sob
 b. Gull for sick
 c. Select, pick out
- BOL**
 a. Begone skink
 b. A British drink
 c. Stupid in-laws

Answers on page 13

SHEAFFER

A prize of a distinctive Sheaffer "Targa" Regency fountain pen with a solid 14-carat gold inlay will be given for the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: *The Times*, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The winners and solution will be published next Saturday.

The winners of last Saturday's competition are: N I A Pink, "Wake-Robin", Prospect Road, Widcombe Hill, Bath; T C Lane, Knowlewood Knap, Wool Warehouse, Dorset; E Thomas, Milton Keynes; M Walters, Oxford Street, Barry, S Glamorgan; C E Blythe, "Lekeham", Kenwick Road, Lough, Lincs.

WEATHER

Strong to gale-force winds will ease across north and north-east Scotland, with squally showers, some of snow or hail. Central and south-east Scotland will be bright or sunny. Elsewhere will be mild and cloudy with outbreaks of light rain or drizzle. Extreme south and south-west will be mostly dry. Outlook: Mild, wind and rain spreading from west.

ABROAD

Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Algeria	15-20	cloudy	Belgium	10-15	cloudy
Australia	15-25	cloudy	Denmark	10-15	cloudy
Canada	15-25	cloudy	France	10-15	cloudy
China	15-25	cloudy	Germany	10-15	cloudy
India	15-25	cloudy	Italy	10-15	cloudy
Japan	15-25	cloudy	Netherlands	10-15	cloudy
USA	15-25	cloudy	Poland	10-15	cloudy
South Africa	15-25	cloudy	Spain	10-15	cloudy
Sweden	10-15	cloudy	Switzerland	10-15	cloudy
Thailand	15-25	cloudy	UK	10-15	cloudy
USSR	15-25	cloudy			

AROUND BRITAIN

Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	10-15	cloudy	Cardiff	10-15	cloudy
Manchester	10-15	cloudy	Edinburgh	10-15	cloudy
Birmingham	10-15	cloudy	Belfast	10-15	cloudy
Nottingham	10-15	cloudy	Sheffield	10-15	cloudy
Leeds	10-15	cloudy	Blackpool	10-15	cloudy
Sheffield	10-15	cloudy	Exeter	10-15	cloudy
Cardiff	10-15	cloudy	Gloucester	10-15	cloudy
Edinburgh	10-15	cloudy	Reading	10-15	cloudy
Belfast	10-15	cloudy	Southampton	10-15	cloudy
Sheffield	10-15	cloudy	Wolverhampton	10-15	cloudy
Blackpool	10-15	cloudy	Worcester	10-15	cloudy
Exeter	10-15	cloudy	York	10-15	cloudy
Gloucester	10-15	cloudy			

LIGHTING-UP TIME

TODAY
 London 4.25 pm to 7.30 am
 Bristol 4.15 pm to 7.45 am
 Manchester 4.25 pm to 7.55 am
 Portsmouth 4.54 pm to 7.51 am

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Thursday: Highest day temp Southampton, 15°C (59°F); lowest day temp Wick, northern Scotland, 5°C (41°F); highest rainfall, Cardiff, 0.3 in; lowest rainfall, Glasgow, 0.4 in.

MANCHESTER

Thursday: Temp: max 6 am to 6 pm, 11°C (52°F); min 6 pm to 6 am, 5°C (41°F). Rain: 24hr to 6 pm, 0.03 in. Sun: 24hr to 6 pm, 0.7 in.

YESTERDAY

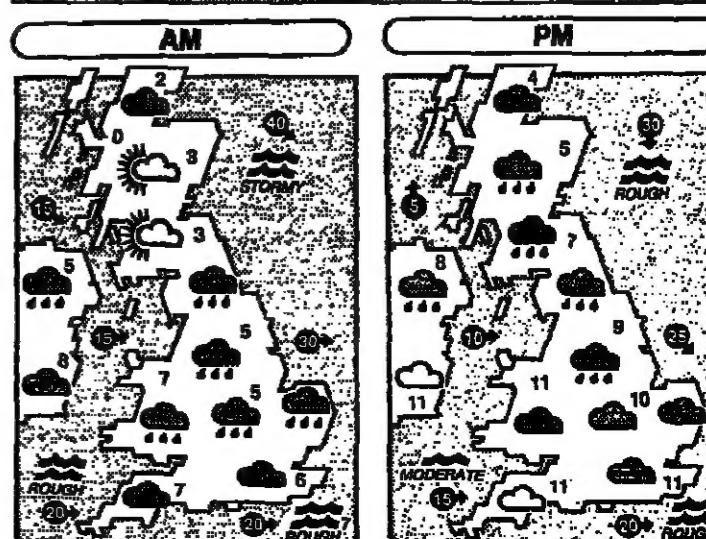
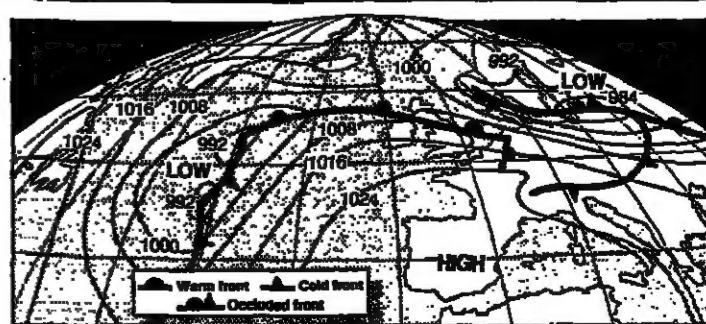
Temperatures at midday yesterday: c, cloud; f, fair; r, rain; h, sun.
 Belfast 11°C (52°F) d
 Birmingham 11°C (52°F) c
 Bristol 11°C (52°F) c
 Cardiff 11°C (52°F) c
 Edinburgh 11°C (52°F) c
 Glasgow 11°C (52°F) c
 London 11°C (52°F) c
 Manchester 11°C (52°F) c
 Nottingham 11°C (52°F) c
 Oxford 11°C (52°F) c
 Perth 11°C (52°F) c
 Plymouth 11°C (52°F) c
 Reading 11°C (52°F) c
 Sheffield 11°C (52°F) c
 Southampton 11°C (52°F) c
 Swansea 11°C (52°F) c
 Telford 11°C (52°F) c
 Wakefield 11°C (52°F) c
 Worcester 11°C (52°F) c
 York 11°C (52°F) c

THE POUND

Bank	Bank	Bank	Bank
Australia	2.18	Italy	2.05
Canada	2.18	Japan	2.05
Denmark	2.18	Netherlands	2.05
France	2.18	Portugal	2.05
Germany	2.18	Spain	2.05
Greece	2.18	Sweden	2.05
Hong Kong	2.18	Switzerland	2.05
India	2.18	USA	2.05
Japan	2.18	Yugoslavia	2.05

Prices for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC.
 Different rates apply to travellers' cheques.
 Retail Price Index: 116.0 (November) London: The FT index closed up 3.8 at 1438.2

NOON TODAY



HIGH TIDES

Location	AM	PM	Location	AM	PM
London Bridge	2.42	4.15	London Bridge	2.42	4.15
Avonmouth	2.42	4.15	Avonmouth	2.42	4.15
Bristol	2.42	4.15	Bristol	2.42	4.15
Cardiff	2.42	4.15	Cardiff	2.42	4.15
Dover	2.42	4.15	Dover	2.42	4.15
Exeter	2.42	4.15	Exeter	2.42	4.15
Glasgow	2.42	4.15	Glasgow	2.42	4.15
Holyhead	2.42	4.15	Holyhead	2.42	4.15
London	2.42	4.15	London	2.42	4.15
Manchester	2.42	4.15	Manchester	2.42	4.15
Nottingham	2.42	4.15	Nottingham	2.42	4.15
Sheffield	2.42	4.15	Sheffield	2.42	4.15
Southampton	2.42	4.15	Southampton	2.42	4.15
Wolverhampton	2.42	4.15	Wolverhampton	2.42	4.15
Worcester	2.42	4.15	Worcester	2.42	4.15
York	2.42	4.15	York	2.42	4.15

TOMORROW

Location	AM	PM	Location	AM	PM
London Bridge	2.42	4.15	London Bridge	2.42	4.15
Avonmouth	2.42	4.15	Avonmouth	2.42	4.15
Bristol	2.42	4.15	Bristol	2.42	4.15
Cardiff	2.42	4.15	Cardiff	2.42	4.15
Dover	2.42	4.15	Dover	2.42	4.15
Exeter	2.42	4.15	Exeter	2.42	4.15
Glasgow	2.42	4.15	Glasgow	2.42	4.15
Holyhead	2.42	4.15	Holyhead	2.42	4.15
London	2.42	4.15	London	2.42	4.15
Manchester	2.42	4.15	Manchester	2.42	4.15
Nottingham	2.42	4.15	Nottingham	2.42	4.15
Sheffield	2.42	4.15	Sheffield	2.42	4.15
Southampton	2.42	4.15	Southampton	2.42	4.15
Wolverhampton	2.42	4.15	Wolverhampton	2.42	4.15
Worcester	2.42	4.15	Worcester	2.42	4.15
York	2.42	4.15	York	2.42	4.15

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